

Does Incentive Pay Motivate teachers? A closer Look at the Teacher Incentive Allotment in Texas

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Abstract

Teacher attrition continues to be a major issue in public education. Hard to staff, low-income schools see the highest attrition rates among public schools. This study explored teachers' experiences with the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program in Texas. The TIA was designed to provide incentives to quality teachers who are willing to work in high-needs schools and was developed based on the legislation (House Bill 3) passed by the 86th Texas Legislature in 2019. The participants in this study were selected from a school district in Texas which was an early adopter of the TIA program. The researcher explored the participants' lived experiences with the TIA to provide insight for policy makers and school district leaders regarding the teachers' decision to remain at a high needs campus as well as in their current school district.

Keywords: Teacher Retention, Teacher Incentive Pay, Motivation, Teacher Turnover, High Needs Campuses

1. Introduction

Every day, educational leaders face the challenges of meeting the needs of all students, funding, and staffing schools with quality teachers. Because classroom teachers have a major influence on a student's success, teacher turnover has long had a negative impact on the field of education. Policy makers have been working since the 1980s to create policies to support staffing classrooms with quality teachers in preparation for the number of teachers retiring (Ingersoll, 2001). School districts all over the United States have also implemented incentive programs to entice teachers to work in high-needs schools and to positively impact teacher quality and attrition overall (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018; Elfers & Plecki, 2014; Fulbeck, 2014).

2. Problem/Significance and Research Questions

Teacher retention has been examined from various viewpoints, including organizational factors, preparation programs, and teacher perceptions of the workplace (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Harris et al., 2019; Ingersoll, 2001). Research regarding organizational factors that contribute to teacher retention shows that administrative support, autonomy, and climate are some of the strongest factors that impact teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Hulpia & Devos, 2010; Ingersoll, 2001). In addition to the factors that impact a teacher's decision stay at a campus or leave that campus, teachers are exiting the profession in record numbers. According to the National Education Association, in February 2022, 55% of teachers surveyed stated they were planning on leaving the field of education sooner than they originally planned, which is a 17% increase from the previous year the poll was taken (Fry, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the alarming rate of teachers are leaving education. Across the United States and around the world, many fields, including education, are experiencing what is being called *The Great Resignation*, which is a massive number of people resigning from their profession due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Sheather & Slattery, 2021). One result of educators leaving the profession in large numbers is that student achievement will be impacted by the loss of experienced teachers. Another possible result of the mass exodus of teachers could be the accelerated exit of experienced, master teachers and the lack of qualified novice teachers entering the profession.

2.1 Research Questions

This study focused on teachers who participated in the TIA program and received incentive allotments. The teachers were employed at both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools in a Texas school district. The following research questions guided this phenomenological research study:

1. To what extent, if any, did the TIA motivate teachers to continue teaching at a Title I school?
2. To what extent, if any, did the TIA motivate teachers to continue teaching at a non-Title I school?

3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study was Ryan and Deci's (2020) self-determination theory (SDT) of motivation. Ryan and Deci's theory of motivation is explained through the lens of satisfying basic psychological needs. SDT supports the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Ryan and Deci called these supports basic psychological needs. The Self-Determination theory is based on a continuum from amotivation to intrinsic motivation. Amotivation is linked to a lack of motivation, and intrinsic motivation is propelled through an internal motivation that is built through interest and enjoyment. Understanding what motivates people to stay in a profession is essential to understanding how an organization can improve employee retention.

An important component of the SDT theory is the focus on autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). *Autonomous motivation* occurs when someone is voluntarily motivated to do a task because of their motivation toward the task. *Controlled motivation* comes into play when a person completes a task because they are supposed to or feel they must as part of their job expectations. Further, SDT theory is guided by extrinsic motivational factors and intrinsic motivational factors. The

extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors can then be examined in more detail through regulations that guide people's behaviors.

4. Review of Existing Literature

4.1 Historical Trends in Teacher Retention

Teacher attrition occurs when a teacher leaves the field of education entirely (Harris et al., 2019; Ingersoll, 2001). Based on findings from a study on teacher attrition conducted by Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019), teacher attrition rates are 8% annually in the United States. These researchers found that 90% of teacher demand is attributed to teacher attrition. Most other high-performing nations have rates of 3 to 4% annually, and those numbers tend to hold steady over time. Teacher attrition rates in the United States are as much as 5% higher. In 1992, the U.S. annual attrition rate was at 5.1%, significantly lower than its current annual attrition rate of 8% (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019).

Teacher *migration rates* (a teacher moving to a different school either in or out of district) are also around 8%, according to Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019). The percentage of teachers leaving education or changing schools and/or districts has created a supply and demand issue for education. Only one-third of teachers leaving the profession are retiring (Ingersoll, 2001). Contributing to the supply and demand issue is the low number of teachers enrolling in teacher preparation programs. A decline in enrollment has also occurred in recent years in teacher preparation programs (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). According to Ingersoll (2001), the overall supply and demand issues are not created by higher student enrollment and teacher retirement but by a revolving door of teacher migration and attrition.

4.2 Effects of Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover not only impacts student achievement. It also impacts the teachers who remain, the school climate, and any progress or goals the school is working toward to improve. Teachers leave education, transfer schools, or change subjects or grade levels for many different reasons, and all these changes impact schools, including a school's climate and student achievement (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018; Hanushek et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Research shows that the classroom teacher is the most important factor in a child's education when it comes to achievement (Chetty et al., 2014). With teacher turnover on the rise and approximately 40% of public schools with unfilled vacancies (National Center of Education Statistics, 2022; Ronfeldt et al., 2013), it is important to understand impact of teacher turnover.

4.3. Effects of Teacher Turnover on Teachers and Teacher Quality

Teacher turnover affects many areas of education, such as student achievement, school climate, and the quality of teachers. When teachers leave a school or district or change positions, it creates holes that need to be filled within the schools. The teacher filling the vacant position must now learn and adjust to the new position, and the teacher who left must learn and adjust to their new position. There is also a burden placed on the teaching teams left behind. Often when a teacher leaves, it creates more work for the team and disrupts the teams' relationships (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). In the time it takes the incoming teacher or the teacher who changed classifications to learn the new material and acclimate to the new position, there is a negative effect on the level of teacher quality (Atteberry et al., 2017).

The most challenging schools often have the highest number of nontraditionally certified teachers, which accounts for some of the highest number of teachers leaving the profession in the first 5 years (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Vagi & Pivovarova, 2017). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) conducted a research study on teacher attrition that provided insight regarding teachers who become alternatively certified. According to their research, alternatively certified teachers are 150% more likely to leave education early. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in teacher

shortages, the practice of hiring alternatively certified teachers and teachers who have not fully completed their certifications to meet staffing needs is on the rise (Carver-Thomas et al., 2022).

4.4 Effects of Teacher Turnover on Student Achievement

Many studies showed that teacher turnover negatively affects students in many areas, such as in student achievement (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018; Hanushek et al., 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Studies showed students in low-performing schools see higher rates of turnover and a lower quality of teachers. These studies also revealed students in high-poverty schools have the highest negative effect on achievement when they experience teacher turnover (Atteberry et al., 2017; Ingersoll, 2001). In a research study done through the New York school system, Atteberry et al. (2017) reported on the impact teacher turnover had on student achievement. Their research showed students in lower-income schools are more likely to experience teacher reassignments. These reassignments in teaching staff contributed to lower achievement for the students who were impacted by the reassignment (Atteberry et al., 2017). While the majority of research links teacher turnover to low achievement, a study in the Washington, D.C., public schools which looked at the correlation between teacher turnover and student achievement showed a different result. Adnot et al. (2017) found some positive correlations between teacher turnover and student achievement. In classrooms where low-quality teachers exited teaching, the highly skilled teachers who took over the classrooms created a positive impact on student achievement.

4.5 Teacher Pay Incentives as a Retention Strategy

To improve teacher retention rates, school systems across the United States are working to find ways to motivate, incentivize, attract, and retain teachers in classrooms. Recently, monetary initiatives that aid with student loans, housing, signing bonuses, and tuition assistance have been used in certain parts of the country to incentivize students to enter the field of education (Harris et al., 2019). Teacher incentive pay programs differ across the United States. A common incentive in recent history is based on National Board Certification (NBCT). Overall, NBCT is on the rise in the United States likely due to the increase in incentive programs (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2019).

4.6 Policy Implementation for the Texas Teacher Allotment

In 2019, the 86th Texas Legislative Session passed HB 3, which mandated that school districts develop teacher pay incentive programs. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) laid the groundwork for the requirements of the pay incentives, and the school districts had autonomy in creating their incentive pay system (Texas Education Agency, 2019). Through HB 3, the TIA program was created to improve teacher equity among schools, retention, recruitment, and student achievement in some of the neediest schools by offering incentive pay for top teachers (Texas Education Agency, 2019; Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). A large focus of the TIA was to incentivize quality teachers to stay in the classroom instead of choosing the option to move up to administration to earn higher salaries (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). The program offered multiple levels of recognition, including *recognized*, *exemplary*, and *master* teachers (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). Each category allowed the teacher to receive different funding incentives. The funding incentives were also based on the needs of the campus; thus, if a teacher chose to work at a high-needs campus, he or she may qualify for a higher rate of pay depending on which category was attained - recognized, exemplary, or master category (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). Another way teachers were able to earn extra pay was by earning the National Board Certification (Texas Education Agency, 2019). National Board Certification automatically allowed the teacher to participate in the TIA.

If a district wished to participate in the TIA program, the district must have met specific criteria. First, districts were required to create a local designation system and submit it for approval to TEA and Texas Tech University (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). The local designation system must have included teacher classroom observations based on the Texas Teacher Evaluation System (T-TESS), student growth based on annual accountability testing, and other factors. The criteria for the local designation plan also included student growth portfolios—which could be measured through pre- and post-assessments—or

other forms of assessment the district chose, including the STAAR. All student growth measures chosen by the district were required to show validity and reliability (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022).

4.7 Other Factors for the Texas Teacher Allotment System

Districts were required to include additional factors, including but not limited to surveys from students and parents, leadership responsibilities, and contributions to the district (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). Districts had the autonomy to select what other factors they included in their plan; however, the district must have been able to prove validity and reliability for the additional factors in all campuses across the district.

After the data capture year, approved districts received up to 32,000 dollars a year per designated teacher in the district (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). The district used 90% of the funding on teacher compensation for the specific campus on which the designated teacher worked. Once teachers earned a designation, they were eligible for the designation for five years. The designation moved with the teacher from district to district depending on the time of year the teacher changed districts.

Currently, in Texas there are 1,247 school districts (Texas Education Agency, 2022). Out of the 1,247 school districts, 240 districts have applied or completed the process of acquiring their Local Designation System approved for TIA as of September 30, 2021 (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2022). The TIA program has paid allotments totaling over \$43,000,000 to 127 districts and charter schools and to 4,617 teachers since the program started. One reason that more districts have not applied may be because of COVID-19 and the issues the pandemic has caused the school systems.

4.8 Summary

Teacher incentive pay has been explored in various research studies (Chiang et al., 2017; Goodman & Turner, 2013); however, few studies have explored the impact an incentive had in retaining teachers on a campus (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018). Research regarding incentive pay in Texas has been heavily focused on student achievement (Balch & Springer, 2015). The new TIA program has not been explored in depth to determine how it impacts teachers' decisions to stay at their current school and in particular, at high-needs schools. This study provides lawmakers as well as school district leaders with an insight into the relationship between the TIA and teacher retention. As teachers continue to exit school districts and the profession (NCES, 2022), continued research regarding incentive programs such as the TIA are critical in providing important insights that are needed for improving current incentive pay programs and creating future incentive pay programs.

5. Methods

5.1 Research Design

The researcher used the qualitative method of phenomenology to explore teachers' experiences within the TIA program. According to D. Creswell and Poth (2018), "A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (p. 76). Marshal et al. (2022) described phenomenological research as a way to "explore, describe, and analyze the meaning of individual lived experience" (p. 22). The examination of this study's data included an exploration of teacher interviews and data from a questionnaire. Phenomenological research typically includes multiple interviews with participants who are a part of the phenomenon being studied (Marshal et al., 2022). This study focused on teachers who participated in the TIA program and received incentive allotments. The teachers were employed at both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools in a Texas school district. The following research questions guided this phenomenological research study:

1. To what extent, if any, did the TIA motivate teachers to continue teaching at a Title I school?
2. To what extent, if any, did the TIA motivate teachers to continue teaching at a non-Title I school?

The study consisted of two data collection phases. The first phase consisted of a questionnaire that was shared district-wide with teachers in the school district participating in the TIA program. The survey allowed the researcher to use convenience sampling to select participants who have received allotments from the TIA program and who work either at Title 1 campus or non-Title 1 campus. The second phase of the study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with five participants from Title 1 campuses and four participants from non-Title 1 campuses. All participants received allotments through the TIA program and worked at either a in Title 1 campus or a non-Title 1 campus. The interviews in Phase II allowed the researcher to record the participants' lived experiences with the TIA program.

5.2 Data Context

Phenomenological research provides the researcher the opportunity to understand participants' lived experiences with a specific phenomenon. The teachers included in this study all received incentive allotments through the TIA program and shared their unique experiences with the TIA program. Through the TIA program, these teachers had the opportunity to make \$90,000 - \$100,000, annually depending on their current district salary. As a designated master teacher, classroom teachers can earn as much as an extra \$32,000 dollars a year for 5 years on top of their district salary through the TIA program. Because only 10% of Texas school districts currently receive these funds, the teachers in this East Texas school district are part of a specific phenomenon that has allowed them to earn pay increases only a limited number of teachers in Texas have been able to earn.

According to Salary.com, the average teacher in Texas earns around \$54,000 a year (<https://www.salary.com/research/salary/benchmark/public-school-teacher-salary/tx>). Some districts across Texas offer different types of incentive pay through locally sourced funding.

However, these local incentive programs award much smaller amounts of funding to teachers and were a part of the local district's annual operating funds. The TIA program's funding is sourced from the state through HB3 and is not funded from local money which allows for much larger awards to teachers.

5.3 Sample Selection

The participants in this phenomenological study were selected using a convenience sampling approach during the first phase of the study. Participants were selected from an East Texas school district that serves over 8,400 students and 1,400 staff members. This district was approved by TEA to participate in the TIA program and had been awarded teacher allotments through TIA. This school district was chosen because it was in the first cohort of districts who participated in the TIA program. The district began offering designations to teachers who were eligible for allotments based on 2018–2019 student data. The allotments were awarded in the 2019–2020 school year. The selected participants worked at Title 1 schools and non-Title schools in this district and provided different perspectives regarding their decision to remain on their current campus.

The Phase I survey data included 53 participants who filled out the survey. All participants who completed the Phase I questionnaire were invited to participate in the Phase II in-depth interview. The first 10 participants who responded that they would like to participate in the Phase II interview and who met the purposive selection criteria were then sent consent forms. Participants were invited to participate in Phase II based on the information collected in the electronic questionnaire using the following selection criteria:

1. The type of campus the participants serve (Title 1 or non-Title 1).
2. The participant has received an allotment from the TIA program.
3. The participant is currently working in the school district where they received the TIA allotment.

Once the letter of consent was signed and returned, the researcher conducted individual interviews via Zoom which averaged 60 to 90 minutes via Zoom. The participants ranged in teaching experience from 4 to 45 years.

5.4 Data Analysis

NVivo software was used to analyze the transcripts from the semi-structured interviews. The researcher used a qualitative data analysis approach consisting of reading and rereading transcripts, extracting statements that relate to the phenomenon, formulating meaning from the significant statements, and organizing the meanings into themes (Colaizzi, 1978). The NVivo software helped break down the interviews through the identification of themes in participants' responses. The researcher used open coding to analyze the interviews. Open coding allows the researcher to find common themes among what participants have shared in the context of the phenomenon that is being studied (Saldana, 2016). Through the coding process, themes were identified across the two research questions.

The researcher provided textural and structural descriptions (D. Creswell & Poth, 2018) using the themes from the combined interviews and questionnaires. The textural description focused on what the participants experienced. The data analysis process also included structural descriptions to provide context to the setting of the phenomenon. The thematic, textural, and structural descriptions were all combined into a written form that describes the phenomenon. The data were analyzed through the lens of the research questions, which explored teachers' experiences with the TIA program and their motivation to stay at high-needs schools.

5.5 Validity and Reliability

D. Creswell and J. Creswell (2018) defined *qualitative validity* as the procedure the researcher uses to ensure the accuracy of the instrument. This study used *member checking* and *clarification of bias*. These two methods allowed the researcher to check for validity in the research findings. Member checking is the process of participants reading their interview transcript to ensure their interview has been transcribed as they intended and does not reflect the researcher's bias or opinions. It is important in the validation process for participants to feel that their experience has been shared and transcribed accurately (J. Creswell, 2013).

6. Findings

The research results shared in this study focus on the following themes: (a) Teacher retention, with two subthemes of income satisfaction and the decision to remain at the campus and in the district, (b) student achievement, (c) lack of respect from administration. When considering student achievement, the data showed that teachers were not motivated by the funding. Finally, an area emerged that was not anticipated. Several teachers shared their perception of a lack of support and respect from their administrators in terms of their teaching expertise and the earned TIA incentives.

6.1 Theme #1 Teacher Retention

In terms of teacher retention, two areas emerged: income satisfaction and the decision to remain at the campus and in the district. Throughout the interview process, retention was a common thread shared among participants' experiences. Many different factors were shared that contributed to teacher retention. Participants shared that income satisfaction, increased student achievement, incentives to stay in the classroom and district, and retirement security were all positive factors contributing to their motivation to stay.

6.1.1 Subtheme #1 Income Satisfaction.

The most reported finding related to income satisfaction and participants reporting that they are satisfied with their income as a teacher. Participants had received TIA designations and were awarded financial incentives for those designations. Participants from both the Title 1 campuses and non-title 1 campuses reported feeling satisfied with the additional funding provided through TIA incentive pay. Participants shared that they felt they were being paid for the hard work it takes to be an effective teacher. Teachers reported they were satisfied with the pay incentive (TIA) for the work they were doing to improve student

achievement. Two teachers reported that after receiving the TIA incentive, they did not need to look for an administrative job to support her family.

6.1.2 Subtheme #2 Incentive to Stay in the Classroom and District

One theme included findings related to experiences shared by participants regarding their motivation to stay in the classroom or in the school district due to the TIA program and the incentive pay they are earning. Participants made it clear that they will continue to work in a TIA-eligible position and in a TIA district. Participants acknowledged they would consider leaving their campus; however, they were likely to stay in the East Texas school district as long as it offered the TIA program.

Another participant shared that the TIA pay was the decisive factor that caused him to stay in education. The additional funds that were earned had a very strong impact not only in his current situation, but also when planning for retirement. The participant shared that retirement was not far off in his plans. Further, the participant shared that he had no desire to retire early as the incentive funds changed his perspective on his earning potential as a classroom teacher. An unexpected facet of the research was the idea that the TIA have a positive impact on retaining teachers in the district but also retaining teachers in their classroom roles longer. Several other participants shared that they had no interest in seeking early retirement from classroom teaching as long as they were earning the additional incentive funds.

6.2 Theme #2 Student Achievement

Participants shared their views in regard to how the TIA program had influenced their motivation to improve student achievement. The researcher was surprised to hear that participants did not feel they needed extra motivation to improve student achievement. They reported that they work to improve student achievement with or without incentive pay. The questions regarding student achievement in the interview exposed teachers' passion for teaching, and that passion is why they focus on student achievement. This passion for student success was not driven by the incentive pay.

One teacher shared that she is a highly motivated professional and she wants all of her students to succeed. She stated that the incentive is available, but "at the end of the day, I'm going to ensure my students are learning and prepared for the next grade level." Another teacher shared that she was not sure that the TIA motivated her to work harder. She did state she is better at analyzing student data and using that data more frequently to plan for instruction in her classroom.

6.3 Theme #3 Lack of Respect From Administration

One theme that emerged focused on the experiences the participants shared regarding the TIA program and the lack of respect from the administration. During the interview process with Title 1 participant teachers, they discussed their experiences with the administration on campus and the lack of respect some of them felt from their administration despite being a TIA-designated teacher.

One participant explained that her principal did not acknowledge or celebrate the teachers who had earned a TIA. Many teachers thought that by working to earn the designation, they would be appreciated and respected by both the district and campus administration. This participant said that did not happen, and she was disappointed.

Another participant felt that administrators at the campus level did not understand what teachers do on a day to day basis with students. This participant stated there was a great lack of appreciation for the teachers' expertise and accomplishments that had allowed them to earn a TIA.

7. Theory of Motivation and the Research Findings

Theory of motivation suggests that human beings are motivated through different types of motivation, such as autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Autonomous motivation is evidenced by a person completing a task because they want to complete it. Controlled motivation is evidenced by task completion based on an obligation or a feeling of the task being an

expectation. As the researcher interviewed participants and analyzed their lived experiences with the TIA program, different types of motivation emerged from the participants' experiences. Participants in the study from both Title 1 and non-Title 1 campuses shared that they were motivated to improve student achievement with or without incentive pay. These participants wanted to improve student achievement because of their passion for teaching and what they believed was right for their students.

The researcher also found teachers' decisions to stay at the campus or leave their campus was influenced by extrinsic motivation based on the external reward of continuing to earn incentive pay. When participants were asked about their motivation to stay or leave their campus, the responses focused less on their specific campus and more on district-level movement. The majority of participants were happy at their current campus; additionally, they were more focused on staying within the district. Participants did not plan to leave the district because they wanted to continue earning incentive pay through the TIA program.

8. Implications

8.1 Implications for Practice

In education, incentive pay has been used nationwide to improve student achievement (Balch & Springer, 2015). The findings in this study confirm what was shared in the literature regarding incentive pay and student achievement. Teachers in this study did not feel that incentive pay changed their motivation to improve student achievement. Only a few studies have looked at the impact incentive pay has on teacher retention (Cowan & Goldhaber, 2018).

8.2 Implications for School Districts

Currently, around 10% of school districts in Texas participate in the TIA program. The teachers receiving incentive pay from the TIA program are part of a phenomenon that has allowed them to earn salaries higher than 90% of teachers in the state. Understanding teachers' lived experiences with the TIA program allows other school districts information which may factor into their decision to implement the TIA program. This study's findings clearly reflect the TIA program positively influenced teacher retention in an East Texas district where this study was conducted. As school districts continue to work toward higher retention rates, the TIA program will be available for districts as a tool to retain teachers.

8.3 Implications for Legislation

The TIA program in Texas is unique in that it was created by the Legislature and is funded through the state. A few districts around the state have local incentive pay programs funded with local money. The TIA program is currently the only incentive pay program funded by the state that allows teachers to earn, in some cases, nearly \$100,000 a year. This study provides evidence the TIA program is doing what it was designed to do. The program was started to retain high-quality teachers in education at campuses and particularly at high needs campuses. This study found that not only did the incentive pay motivate teachers at Title 1 schools to stay in education, incentive pay also influenced teachers at non-Title 1 schools.

9. Conclusion

"This is a life-changing career-altering program.

I would be absolutely insane to try and leave this."—Participant 1

The TIA program provides a unique opportunity for teachers in Texas to earn high levels of incentive pay. The opportunity to earn administrative-level pay while staying in the classroom is a phenomenon in Texas made possible by the TIA program. Traditionally, in order to earn higher wages in education, teachers needed to move to administrative-level positions. School districts participating in the TIA program are providing a unique pathway for teachers to earn higher wages without leaving the classroom.

The TIA program provides school districts with a pathway for teachers to earn higher wages to significantly increase retention and possibly recruit teachers. District leaders and legislators must continue to explore the influence research-based incentive pay strategies have on retaining high-quality teachers in Texas and determine how those incentives influence recruitment as well. The future of education depends on national, state, and local leaders. The decisions leaders make have the power to positively change teacher retention rates and change the trajectory of the education system. As Nelson Mandela observed, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (GBH News, 2013).

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