



Garland Independent School District
Office of Superintendent

Sept. 27, 2020

To: House Public Education Committee, Chairman Huberty and Vice Chairman Bernal
Re: Request for Information, Interim Charge 1, Question 1

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Chairman Huberty, Vice Chairman Bernal, and members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a response to your request for information on Interim Charge 1: *Can the state delay implementation of the teacher incentive pay program to push it out to the next biennium? If so, what would be the impact on the current budget, as well as budget implications for the 2022- 23 biennium?*

Recently, I was invited to speak on a panel about the potential of the Teacher Incentive Allotment for school districts across Texas. I was joined by a teacher from Dallas, the Superintendent of Ector County, and my friend Jim Littlejohn.

Jim is now the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Curriculum & Instruction at Clint ISD, but I knew him once as a teacher in Ysleta. He was— and still is— an extraordinary educator, and as we discussed this policy meant to reward great teachers, the thought struck me: If we could have retained him for the same salary he has now, think of how important that would have been to all of the kids that were benefiting from his instruction.

And then I had another thought: Maybe I would've stayed in teaching, too.

We of course need great administrators just as we need great teachers, but it's no secret one can expect far greater financial security than the other. The reality is our teachers have families. They have other obligations they have to make. **In order to make ends meet, they must move up to the front office, even if the classroom is where their passion truly lies.**

Now consider this: **In the Dallas market, people can make more money without a degree than they do teaching.** If I'm a teacher, and I'm going through all the obstacles that now come with being a teacher, I could leave the teaching profession and make more money, sometimes twice as much more money. Why wouldn't I?

We must reward, retain, recruit, and re-energize our best and brightest teachers. By providing the Teacher Incentive Allotment, effective educators will no longer be made to feel as though they need a different job, a second job, or even a promotion into administration. We must honor the teaching profession, not only with notoriety, but with something that can go in their paycheck and their retirement and carry them forward.

Garland ISD is a school district that is experiencing urbanization. Over 60% of our students currently experience economic instability, and just under 30% are considered English Language Learners. These demographics experience achievement gaps that our teachers are expected to close. When you have these rapid shifts, old traditional practices need to be put aside, and I can think of no better way to improve and progress than through incentives.

The best gift I could give any student in my district is a quality teacher. These teachers must have not only curricular expertise, but instructional expertise, and be able to execute that game plan to ensure kids learn. That's what our students deserve. Children are an investment, and the best way we can invest in them is through our teachers.

It is our hope that neighboring school districts and those across the state will join us in taking advantage of this opportunity to best serve our students in this difficult time. To that end, we've developed a GISD TIA Field Guide for any and all interested Texas administrators. **We have put a great deal of time and effort into both our TIA application and the Field Guide**, and would hope our state's leadership recognizes the work that has already begun in districts like Garland, just as we continue to recognize the hard work of our educators.

Right now, we don't know what's in front of us, with COVID or its attendant economic shortfall. But if we don't continue to invest in our public education system, then we'll end up investing in other things. We're going to be investing in prison systems. We're going to be investing in unemployment. We're going to be investing in having people retrained and unready for a livelihood.

But if we stay centered on our school system, and reward the best and brightest, we're going to close achievement gaps and see positive outcomes across the state of Texas.

We appreciate your time and consideration.

In gratitude,
Supt. Ricardo Lopez