



September 30, 2020

The Honorable Dan Huberty  
Chair, Committee on Public Education  
Texas House of Representatives  
Texas Capitol, Room E2.408  
Austin, Texas 78701

RE: Charge #2 - Part 2 -Technology Instructional Materials Allotment.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

**Background:**

In 2011, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature created the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment giving districts more control, flexibility, and discretion on what instructional materials to purchase and whether to deliver the content digitally or through print-based products. SB 6 (82-1) created the TIMA and stipulated that the legislature would appropriate 50% of the State Board of Education's distribution from the Permanent School Fund into the Technology and Instructional Materials Fund. The Texas Education Agency reserves a small portion from the TIMF to pay for some allowable expenditures and then distributes the remaining funds to districts via the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment. SB 6 (82-1) required school districts to certify that all their students have access to the instructional materials that cover all the TEKS for each subject area and directs districts to ensure they have the necessary instructional materials necessary to make the certification before they spend funds from the TIMA on technology.

SB 6 (82-1) also eliminated the Technology Allotment since districts would now be able to use the TIMA to purchase technology. The Technology Allotment was created in 1992 and had given districts approximately \$30 a student for technology resources and professional development up until September of 2011. In most biennia, the legislature appropriated approximately \$270 million for the Technology Allotment.

**Allowable uses of the TIMA:**

- Purchase instructional materials
- Purchase technological equipment for instructional use
- Pay for the training of teachers in the use of technology
- Pay for the technical support of equipment that is used directly related to student learning
- Pay for software that manages the instructional materials.
- Pay for software that analyzes the use and effectiveness of the instructional materials.

**Commissioner's Use of the TIMA**

Prior to the commissioner determining each district's Technology and Instructional Material Allotment, the commissioner determines how much is necessary to manage the TIMA, including the cost of the Texas Resource Review and how much he will assign for the Technology Lending Grants.

**Problems:**

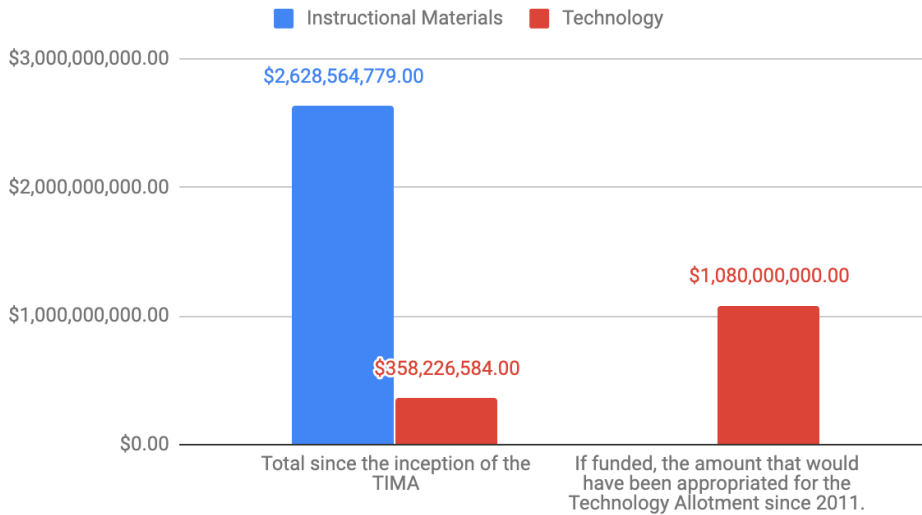
Although the intent of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature was that the TIMA would be a dual-purpose fund to support the purchase of instructional materials and technology, the data indicates that because the cost of instructional materials has escalated and because of the size of the proclamations, districts have had very little discretion on how to use the TIMA.

The following chart provides the amount in the TIMA, how much of the TIMA was spent in each biennium, and the amount expended on instructional materials and technology.

<b>Biennium Comparison</b>	<b>Expenditures on Instructional Materials</b>	<b>Percentage Spent on Instructional Materials</b>	<b>Expenditures on Technology</b>	<b>Percentage Spent on Technology</b>
2011-2013 (\$750,050,000)	\$517,631,789.00	84.07%	\$97,985,427.00	15.91%
2013-2015 (\$812,570,416)	\$693,294,539.00	92.38%	\$57,209,882.00	7.62%
2015-2017 (1,248,418,781**)	\$777,900,127.19	90.09%	\$85,553,858.71	9.91%
2018-2019 (\$1,391,850,495.15)	\$639,738,323.91	84.49%	\$117,477,416.61	15.51%
2020-2021* ( \$1,043,652,450.43)	\$1,026,251,800.21	92.02%	\$88,940,976.22	7.98%
*As of July 2, 2020**Includes the carry over				
Total since the inception of the TIMA	\$3,654,816,579.31	89.10%	\$447,167,560.54	10.90%
If funded, the amount that would have been appropriated for the Technology Allotment since 2011.			\$1,350,000,000.00	

The following chart is a comparison of how much was appropriated for the Technology Allotment (\$270,000,000 per biennium) prior to 2011, and how much was spent on technology by Texas school districts using the TIMA after 2011.

Comparison of Technology Expenditures in TIMA vs. Tech Allotment



In a recent survey conducted by TCEA, 50% of the districts that responded indicated that they rarely, if ever, used the TIMA for technology.

When asked why districts rarely use the TIMA for technology purchases, the primary reason given is that they are reserving the remaining balance for the next biennium's instructional materials purchase. The respondents to our survey indicated that the cost of the instructional materials increased in direct correlation to the size of the allotment, leaving little, if no money for technology equipment, support, or professional development. Below is the amount of money that was remaining in the TIMA at the end of each biennium.

Biennium	Remaining Allotment
2011–12	\$ 159,593,469.38
2012–13	\$ 133,000,762.22
2013–14	\$ 409,746,317.94
2014–15	\$ 197,378,846.24
2015–16	\$ 575,914,305.60
2016–17	\$ 371,515,444.64
2017–18	\$ 929,026,720.60
2018–19	\$ 685,865,417.86

Most districts do not view the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment as a source for technology funding. According to our survey, 61% of the districts rarely, if ever, include technology personnel in the discussions on the use of the TIMA.

**Recommendations:**

The TIMA is not effective in providing funding for both instructional materials and technology under its current structure. If the legislature continues to view this fund as a source to provide students and teachers with necessary digital resources for learning and assessment, then we believe the following changes should be made:

- Remove the requirement to purchase all instructional materials before a district can purchase technology. Districts are already required to certify that they have instructional materials for all courses except physical education; thus, this stipulation is not necessary. Districts should be able to determine how the funds are used to achieve their needs and meet the certification requirement.
  - Require TEA to provide more assistance in helping districts learn how to leverage this allotment to align their goals with the state's Long-Range Plan for Technology. This should include assisting districts in envisioning the TIMA as a strategic fund that can assist their efforts in transitioning their district to digital instructional materials. They should continue their efforts in providing less expensive options via OER and providing qualitative reviews of a vast array of instructional materials in the Texas Resource Review. We particularly recommend that TEA include the price of the instructional materials in their reviews as stipulated in the legislation that created the TRR. The goal should be to help districts find less expensive instructional materials so that more funding is available for technology.
  - We recommend that the legislature require the SBOE to limit the size of the proclamations to no more than 75% of the expected distribution as stipulated in HB 663 in the 86th Legislature.
  - We also recommend that the legislature stipulate that a certain percentage of the TIMA be used by districts for technology purchases. This could be determined by the legislature or the commissioner.
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**Review of Programs Funded by Set Asides from the TIMA:**

The **Texas Resource Review** is a logical extension of the original intent of SB 6 from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature: to improve the adoption, deployment, and use of instructional materials in Texas public schools. As the format, source, and medium of instructional materials evolve, the tools needed to “support the use of instructional materials” and “providing access to technological equipment for instructional use” may change. The Texas Resource Review:

- Assists school districts and open-enrollment charter schools in selecting high-quality instructional materials.
- Includes information on price, operating requirements, and any other relevant information.
- Provides third party independent analysis of TEKS alignment and editorial reviews of the quality of the materials.

The Texas Resource Review was created to improve the quality of instructional materials and to save taxpayer money by increasing fair market competition. The relatively small investment from the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment to create and maintain the TRR is more than offset by the savings that will be achieved through the portal.

The legislation to authorize the TRR was [HB 3526](#) (Howard - 143 Yeas, 0 Nays, and 2 present, not voting). It was also authorized in [SB 810](#).

The **Technology Lending Grants** were initially authorized by SB 6 from the 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature as part of the broader effort to make instructional materials more accessible to students. They were automatically sunset as part of a compromise to enable the larger policy effort in the hope that the success of the initial grants would both demonstrate the return on investment and improve the situation of students suffering from a “technology gap” and would therefore be revisited. In 2017, the legislature wisely reauthorized these important discretionary grants in order to help students close the “homework gap.” This policy change is even more significant during the COVID pandemic.

The legislation to reauthorize the technology lending grants was [HB 3526](#) (Howard - 143 Yeas, 0 Nays, and 2 present, not voting).

The commissioner may utilize up to \$25 million of the TIMA for the Technology Lending Grants. In both the 2018-2019, and 2020-2021 biennium, he designated \$10 million for these grants.

### **Recommendations:**

The Texas Resource Review and the Technology Lending Grants should be continued. The TEA Commissioner should consider increasing the amount of the Technology Lending Grants to \$25 million considering the inequities the pandemic has uncovered.

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We have always supported the original intent of the TIMA. It should be used to support a district’s efforts to provide quality instructional materials and technology to support instruction. However, we respectfully believe that this goal has not been met as demonstrated in this report and we strongly encourage the legislature to implement our recommendations.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Bergland, Director  
Government Relations  
Texas Computer Education Association