



**House of Representatives  
Response to Notice of Formal Request for Information  
Public Education- Interim Charge 2**

Chairman Huberty and Members of the House Committee on Public Education:

The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) appreciates the opportunity to provide comment on Interim Charge 2 related to determining if any barriers exist in providing a digital learning environment for all children, including an evaluation of the competitive marketplace for blended learning products and services; and evaluating the effectiveness of the Technology and Instructional Materials Allotment (TIMA) in providing districts the resources necessary to equip students with instructional materials and technology, including in the review of all programs and initiatives funded by set asides from the TIMA.

The TASA legislative priority for the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session related to the TIMA states, *“Advocate for increased funding for the TIMA to ensure districts can provide adequate technology and instructional materials to meet higher standards for students. Oppose any carveouts from TIMA that decrease the amount of funds to school districts, including efforts by the state for rating instructional materials. Advocate that funding for “quality” reviews be allocated from a source other than TIMA.”* In accordance with this priority, TASA offers the following input for the Committee’s consideration:

**We recommend maintaining or increasing funding for TIMA.** One of the barriers to providing either a blended learning environment or an all-remote environment is that, at the time the pandemic began, most school districts did not have the resources to provide every child with a device and connectivity. School districts are having to utilize their fund balances, and federal dollars are supplementing the effort. We appreciate the state’s Operation Connectivity efforts and legislative and TEA leadership in helping provide for these items.

Going forward, it is clear that whether learning and settings are blended, hybrid, all-remote, or in-person, we will need robust funding for school districts’ TIMA, to cover the continuing and now-greater technology and instructional materials needs of the 5.5 million students and hundreds of thousands of educators in our state.

**We recommend no further expansion of set-asides.** Texas school districts need a robust and fully funded TIMA in order to provide the best remote and in-person resources for Texas students. The technology and instructional materials that students rely on and use every day are provided from this funding source, and it is one of the only items in the state budget that is a direct benefit to children. **Any dollar diverted at the state level is a dollar that likely will not reach students.**

**We recommend an in-depth review of state-level TIMA set-asides and elimination of set-asides used for underperforming programs.** S.B. 6 in 2011 merged two separate funding sources – instructional materials funding and the Technology Allotment – into one allotment to be used for both purposes while repealing the stand-alone \$30 per student Technology Allotment. “The instructional materials allotment will provide maximum flexibility for school districts to best meet the individual instructional needs of students,” the S.B. 6 bill analysis states. The intent was to provide districts with local flexibility.

The Education Code allows certain state-level uses for the Technology and Instructional Materials Fund – that is, the state can sweep and use funding before the per-student allotment is set and provided to school districts. The more funding the state sweeps, the less funding per student goes directly to districts, classrooms, and students.

Some of these state uses have been in law or practice for years. For example, Education Code Section 31.0211 allows the Commissioner to provide for TIMA funding of juvenile justice alternative education programs. Also, Education Code Section 31.021(c) contains some uses that have been provided by the state over many decades such as the SBOE adoption process.

In addition, the appropriations process provides for some state-level uses of TIMA, such as \$2.5 million per biennium for online college readiness materials, which has been at that level in an appropriations rider since 2011.

However, beginning with the 2017 legislative session, there have been growing directives that can create major set-asides from TIMA:

- **Web Portal/Texas Resource Review.** H.B. 3526 in 2017 added a web portal as a new state-level set-aside in Education Code Section 31.021(c). TEA in 2018 contracted with a vendor for \$3.26 million, and later extended the contract through 2021 with a potential total value of more than \$12.5 million, to create the Texas Resource Review (formerly known as the Instructional Materials Quality Review). Its purpose was a “quality” review of materials. The project has had multiple delays, iterations, names, changes, and challenges. Meanwhile, many school districts pay for a private service, not paid for by the state, that does quality and alignment reviews.
- **Open Educational Resources.** Starting in the 2017 session, an appropriations rider set aside \$20 million for each biennium from the Technology and Instructional Materials Fund, which reduces the amount of the allotment that can reach districts. This amount was double that appropriated for OER in previous years. The Legislature in the appropriations bill requires an annual TEA report on the effectiveness and usage of OER. No reports for 2018-2020 are listed on the [“legislative reports” website](#). Despite receiving double the amount of funding, the most recent report was an [August 2017 report](#) that contained no information on usage.

The lack of transparency in both of these state-level programs is troubling and merits further review of their effectiveness and usage. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on Interim Charge 2. I’m happy to answer any questions or provide further information on TASA’s recommendations to the Committee.

Sincerely,



Dr. Casey McCreary  
Associate Executive Director, Education Policy  
Texas Association of School Administrators