



## Houston Independent School District | Texas

### SUMMARY

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) Project ASPIRE (Accelerating Student Progress, Increasing Results & Expectations) performance-based compensation system (PBCS) for teachers focuses on teacher effectiveness and growth in student learning at both the campus and the individual teacher levels. HISD provides a comprehensive evaluation of student improvement using value-added analysis. The PBCS allows for teachers, principals, assistant principals, and deans of instruction at 118 high-need schools to become eligible for incentives through this project. HISD is the largest urban school district in Texas and the seventh largest in the United States. It faces many challenges, including low graduation and high dropout rates. It is the highest poverty district in Texas, and 92.3 percent of the students are from minority backgrounds. A total of 11.7 percent of the teacher workforce leaves each year. A survey conducted by The New Teacher Project found that HISD's highest performing teachers plan to leave within three years and do not consistently plan to remain in the district longer than lower performing teachers.

### PROGRAM GOALS AND EVALUATION

Project ASPIRE goals include: increase teacher and principal effectiveness, improve student achievement and close the achievement gap; reform teacher and principal appraisal and compensation systems; and increase the number of effective teachers in hard-to-staff subjects and schools. HISD uses formative and summative evaluations to further refine the program goals and determine the effectiveness of Project ASPIRE.

**State:** Texas

**Location:** Houston

**Award amount:** \$31,570,781

**TIF Cohort:** 3

**STEM Grantee:** No

**Number of districts participating:** 1

**Number of schools participating:** 118

**Number of teachers eligible:** 4,909

**Number of principals eligible:** 118

**Superintendent:** Terry Grier

**Key program staff:**

Carla Stevens, Assistant Superintendent  
Research and Accountability

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Annetra Piper, Grants Manager

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## REWARD STRUCTURE

ASPIRE is a performance-pay program that awards teachers and school leaders financial incentives based on three indicators: (1) individual teacher performance based on student progress on state and district assessment programs (EVAAS™ teacher composite cumulative gain index), (2) group performance for teachers based on campus comparative growth in mathematics and reading and EVAAS™ department cumulative gain index within a subject, and (3) group performance campus-wide based on the EVAAS™ campus composite cumulative gain index and campus growth or achievement.

## YEARS 1-4 HIGHLIGHTS

- Redesigned the district teacher and principal appraisal systems to include multiple measures of effectiveness, including student growth
- Implemented professional development aligned with the new appraisal systems
- Developed and piloted a new Career Pathways and Compensation program, Teacher Leaders. The system will enable effective teachers to stay in the classroom while also taking on additional campus-based leadership responsibilities.
- Continued to implement the primarily district-funded PBCS, the ASPIRE award program
- In Year Four, convened the Professional Educator Compensation and Support Committee (PECAS), an advisory group of more than 120 teachers, principals, and central office staff who were nominated by central office staff and Board members. Members are divided into three sub-committees to examine teacher appraisal/ development, teacher base pay, and teacher bonuses/incentives. PECAS work will inform strategy through and beyond Year 5.

## YEAR 5 OUTLOOK

In Year Five, HISD will ...

- Use stakeholder feedback through PECAS to make improvements to teacher appraisal, as well as the district's efforts to better reward and support teachers
- Pilot test additional metrics to support principal appraisal and development and to broaden the holistic teacher development
- Align systems and language of teacher appraisal with the systems of delivery and evaluation for teacher development and supports
- Finalize a longitudinal data set and produce a series of research reports on human capital strategies initiated under the TIF 3 grant

## SUSTAINABILITY

Since Year 1, HISD has provided educators at TIF 3 project schools with a significant additional supplement to the ASPIRE award above and beyond the match commitments under TIF 3. Consequently, HISD is well prepared to continue PBCS incentives past Year 5 of the TIF 3 grant.

## PERFORMANCE-BASED COMPENSATION

- For Year 4, HISD paid 1,373 teachers and school leaders at TIF 3 Project Schools ASPIRE awards in the amount of \$6,242,540—\$1.64 million in federal and local TIF 3 funds, supplemented by over \$4.6 million in additional local funds beyond the required match.
- In Year 4, HISD paid 95 teachers at TIF 3 Project Schools an additional \$157,550 in performance-based compensation through the Career Pathways and Compensation program.