

## **Episode 2: Teacher Incentive Allotment**

**Mary Torres:** Hello, Hays CISD. Thanks for joining us and listening to HaysBeat! the HR Podcast. We're so excited to be able to connect with you through a new mode of communication for us. I'm Mary Torres, HR Project Management Coordinator and I'm your host. The Hays CISD Human Resources Department is committed to bringing you the latest and most accurate information on HR related topics, like health insurance, salary and compensation, teacher incentive, allotment, wellness, the topics are really endless. We hope that through HaysBeat! we can provide you information in a timely manner and that we get a chance to get to know each other. We're excited to bring you our second episode focused on Teacher Incentive Allotment or TIA. And here with us today is Kevin Malandrucolo, the Director of Assessment and Dr. Medina, Chief HR Officer. Kevin, could you tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** Uh, hi, yes, I'm the Director of Assessment and Accountability here in the district in the role for maybe five years now. Getting added on to the TIA this year and you know just excited to hopefully get some teachers some extra money that they deserve and just happy to be a part of this process. So thanks for having me.

**Mary Torres:** Thanks, Kevin.

**Fernando Medina:** Hi Mary, thanks for having us and for being our wonderful host. Let's see, on our first podcast I shared with you guys about my animals and my love for animals. Maybe today I'll also share with you that I love to cook, and so I love to take it down to some original Mexican dishes and learn. Historically, how they were made and loved to do that.

**Mary Torres:** Well, I'd love to try it. So feel free to cook at home and bring some into the office so we can test it out.

**Fernando Medina:** And at work, I'm the Chief Human resources officer and support all of our anything and everything related to benefits, wellness, evaluations, hiring, staffing and supporting our staff with issues that they might be encountering at work.

**Mary Torres:** That's great. Well and I am new to the district. I'm not sure how long I keep get to keep saying that, that I was hired back in September, I think maybe another month or so. What do y'all think? Another day, another day? OK. Well, I'm the HR Project Management Coordinator and I have worked heavily with Dr. Medina and Kevin and really the whole team to get our program moving and get teachers some extra incentive allotments. So, Doctor Medina, let's jump right in. Can you tell us about teacher incentive allotment? What is it? Why was it created?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, it is exactly that. It's an incentive for teachers. And I'm really excited that the legislature passed a Bill, House Bill 3, with the 86 legislative session. And really the vision, this was a Commissioner Morath vision. It's kind of his baby. And he really envisioned that our teacher should be making upwards of 6 figure salaries and that should be able to attract and help retain teachers, you know throughout our state, but specifically at those that have

traditionally been hard to staff. And so that is something that we've been experiencing here in Hays and know we're not an exception to that. And so we're really excited, we're really excited to bring that on here at Hays.

**Mary Torres:** Well, I understand that not every district participates and as a matter of fact 387 out of 1200 school districts in Texas participate in this program. So why did Hays CISD decide to participate?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, I was really excited that Hays had a steering committee that was exploring this as I was coming aboard because it really aligns with what we're about in human resources. And in my mind, our department should be about building and supporting our teachers who ultimately affect the lives of our students. And so, um, I believe that the teacher incentive allotment has that opportunity to do that to build and support our teachers both through recognitions, designations as well as compensation.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah. So that leads into my next question is how does it directly connect to what we do here in HR?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, it helps promote our teachers by giving them designations and I know we're going to get into that little bit of Recognized, Masters and, or Exemplary and Masters. And so I think that we always want to recognize our teachers and certainly reward them for the work, the hard work that they do each and every day on behalf of our students. The other aspect of the teacher incentive allotment is it also promotes professional growth. And that's something we haven't talked a lot about. But a part of the Teacher Incentive Allotment is the National Board Certification Process, which really is a professional growth engagement that our teachers can do and get compensated for it as well.

**Mary Torres:** That's great. Well, in my role, I am heavily involved in TIA and working here the last few months. I can see that this program is a huge undertaking and there's a lot at stake. Can you tell me more about how this was started and implemented?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, yes, last year, 21-22 actually our first implementation year, but before that what people may not know is in the spring of 2021, a steering committee was formed to study TIA and to determine whether we should actually engage in it. And so the steering committee informed what was eventually our implementation plan, but also what would be our spending plan. And what I mean by that is once we are designated and allotted funds, the committee determined that 90% would go to the teacher and 10% go to expanding the program. And so all of that was put into play in motion and we as I came aboard, I supported the implementation of it and that was last year. And so this year we actually submitted our data from the previous year, right?

**Mary Torres:** Well, I've been able to be a part or participate in some of those steering committee meetings and we really need to give them a round of applause because all of those teachers and the people that have been part of that committee give us such great feedback. They ask

really good questions. So I know they're really authentically engaging in what we're asking them to do to help us make the best plan for our school district. So, Kevin, why don't you tell us or talk to us about how you participated in your role with Tia?

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** Yeah, absolutely. I think as we got further into this, we just realized there are a ton of different moving pieces that were attached to getting all the needed information to get that final spreadsheet to submit. For the validation, you know, working with the different departments with SIS, MIS, other people in HR, just trying to get all the different pieces of information so that we could get the right data at the end. Because I think at the end of the day, I think that's our main goal is to get this right the first time so that we get the teachers what they deserve.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah, and it's been a lot of data, Kevin, and I'm not, I mean, it's a lot of data, and I really appreciate those skills that you have. I mean, even just this morning, Kevin was showing me a new formula, which is probably not new for other people, but like, wow, what would have taken me 30 minutes can actually only take a few seconds if you knew how all these formulas work. So it really is a talent. So thank you. Well, can you tell us, so we've been talking about the allotment and designation. So Kevin, why don't you tell us a little bit? And just tell us what the three designations are ?

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** Yes, so depending on the geographic location and percentage of economically disadvantaged kiddos at a particular campus really drives the different allotments for the different levels. So starting at the recognized teacher, they can earn anywhere between \$3,000 and \$9000 extra. Moving up to the exemplary teacher, that can earn anywhere between \$6,000 and \$18,000 to the highest level of the master teacher, that's between \$12,000 to \$32,000. So really excited that we have a lot of a fair share of those district wide.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah, that's a great opportunity for our teachers. But how do they, how are they eligible for these designations? What's the criteria? First, in this first year, we really looked at the teachers that had a growth measure for the STAAR test. So we started with the 4 through 8 Reading and Math and then Algebra I and then English 2 for those End of Course kiddos at the high school. But then on top of that, they had to have the growth measure plus they had to have the T-TESS score for that year. So they had to be evaluated with that and the main thing is they had to be serving kiddos in those areas that had the growth measure.

**Mary Torres:** That's great. So Kevin, was that all the criteria?

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** That's really the, the, the main piece of that. But there's a lot more criteria that is in the handbook for getting down to the right set of teachers.

**Mary Torres:** So OK and we also have developed a web page, a TIA web page teachers, anyone out in the community can go to our web page and find the handbook and be able to find all those resources. So tell us the results of our plan. What happened?

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** So we're excited that in this first round of TIA we were able to list to submit 80 teachers to get a designation. So the top of that, we had 14 master teachers, 29 exemplary teachers, and then 37 recognized teachers. So we're really happy with that number. We know there's a lot of other great teachers out there that we weren't able to submit the designation for because we stuck to the handbook of the top 30%. But in the second year and moving forward, we know that we're going to be able to keep adding teachers to those lists. So we're really excited about that piece.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah, that is definitely our ultimate goal is to be able to include everybody, absolutely. So we had 20 campuses, excuse me, 21 campuses out of in our school district that had at least one teacher earned a designation with a total of 80 teachers that have a recommended designation. What is the highest amount, Dr. Medina, do you know what is the highest amount that a teacher can earn through their allotment?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, you heard Kevin earlier talk about the ranges at the state level, right? And where we actually landed, we actually have a teacher that we have recommended a designation over at Blanco Vista who that teachers highest dollar amount that we're recommending is \$16,068.

**Mary Torres:** That's amazing.

**Fernando Medina:** It is amazing. And we did do the calculations for that teacher's salary, it put that teacher well over \$80,000. So that's great. Wow. It's inching up there to the six figures.

**Mary Torres:** And just another way to show teachers they're valued that we want those highly effective teachers in the classroom. And what an incentive to stay in the classroom because these teachers could go on and be in other positions, but we want them to stay in the classroom and teach our students. So will the teachers get all of that? Tell us a little bit more about the spending plan.

**Fernando Medina:** Right. So as, as I said earlier, the committee did adopt A spending plan of 90/10, which means that once we receive approval from the state and we're expecting to hear that the designations were approved or not approved in February. Yes, in teachers, if they do get approved, the teachers will get their designation on their certificates so that the world can know, right. And then later in May, we'll know the exact dollars and then our plan, spending plan, will then provide the teachers the 90% in June and they will be one paycheck. So it will be one lump sum for them to enjoy their summer. Hmm. And so, and that will be next summer of 2023, next June.

**Mary Torres:** Wow. That's going to be a great time for us to celebrate those teachers and come around to their schools and and really just show them how much we appreciate them. So we talked about also expanding the plan to hopefully include all teachers. How do we, how are we going to do that? How can we grow it and continue to refine our plan?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, I think Kevin made a really good point earlier and we've been focusing on getting it right. And so this has certainly been a learning and a growing opportunity for us and I think we're ready to expand. And so I feel confident about that and our committee, the Steering committee was, received really great feedback from them to expand over to Pre-K through Third grade. And in pre-K we'd use the Circle Assessment results for the student growth measure and in kinder through third grade we would look at M class, specifically the reading data and then we're expanding the English I STAAR data and that's our plan to expand it. We also have a, um, our CTE are our college and technical education programs. Our career and technical education programs are piloting right now what are called precision exams, which are really their industry based exams to see how those might be appropriate to get a student growth measure and this year they would pilot that with the rollout for them in 23-24.

**Mary Torres:** Wow, that's great. We had a meeting last night with some. People from the community and we had a lot of questions about when will we be able to have more teachers participate and how. So, everyone is excited about getting a chance to be a part of this program. Dr. Medina, you alluded to National Board certification. How is that part of the expansion program?

**Mary Torres:** Yes. So National Board certification is part of the teacher incentive allotment. What I think our audience needs to know is that a teacher that is designator who has that certification is actually designated as a recognized teacher. So they actually will receive that dollar amount that range that's anywhere from \$3,000 to \$9,000 depending on, again as Kevin said, the location of the school and the percentage of the economically disadvantaged students at the campus. So yes it is and it is also part of our expansion program. So Mary as you know you've been supporting that work. We currently have a cohort of teachers that we have 16 teachers that have said I'm willing to engage in what really is kind of like a masters level program to get their national board certification and it's going to be anywhere from a year to a two year long program. And the district, our school board is actually funding that, you know, for them and so we're really excited about that.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah, I've attended some of their classes online and it's great. They're learning, they're having great discussion. I really see a lot of reflection happening with their own teaching and just seeing how these teachers are really committed to becoming the best teachers that they can be. So it's been wonderful to be a part of that. Are there any other updates for TIA?

**Fernando Medina:** Sure. I think some of the, there are some smaller type of things that we're doing. Kevin and I have been visiting in Mary as well on just improving our processes and data collection and making sure that we have good data set. But the big ones are that the state is moving away from student progress measures and moving into what they're calling transition tables. And I know Kevin has been going to those sessions and learning about them and he doesn't know this yet, but we're going to ask him to. To a training like we did last year on student growth measures, but to teach us what he's been learning about transition tables.

Mary Torres: Surprise, Kevin! You heard it here, first.

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** There's still a lot that we're learning about the new accountability system because the A-F is also changing. But we do think with these changes, with the transition tables is TIA is going to be closer to the A-F system. So we think that's better for the district, for teachers and for our campuses.

**Mary Torres:** Well, that's good.

**Fernando Medina:** Yeah. And then other things is we're going to focus in T-TESS specifically around the areas that are about teaching and learning environment, which is Domains 2 and 3. We are also adopting the state performance standards and looking at whatever cut scores that they propose. And I know that the state is always looking at those and there might be some changes to those. We'll learn about those as we move along. But whatever those cut scores are, we're going to adopt. So those are some of the big ones.

**Mary Torres:** Well-being here since September I already. You know, this is such a long it's been a long process and a huge undertaking. What are some of the things that we've learned about TIA at Hays CISD?

**Fernando Medina:** You know, Mary, if everything goes well, and I have a lot of confidence that it does, I think what it will ultimately do is help us realize our vision, which is about building and supporting our people. And that means that they will be recognized and that they will be compensated for their work. That's like the biggest thing. And that was the commissioner's vision, you know, around that. And then the thing that I think that we learned as we do always is that there's always an opportunity to improve our communication, education and engagement. Maybe you can talk a little bit about the things that we've talked about, Mary.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah, well. That's an exciting and actually fun part of my job. I feel like this is the piece where I get to engage with faculty and staff and other employees and go out into the district going to campuses. So I am the single point of contact for teacher incentive allotment. So that's one way I can communicate one-on-one, have meetings with any campus or principal. Another piece that's new is what we're doing right now. HaysBeat! The HR podcast. So that's something that we started. It's been a big and fun project and just getting the word out and putting this together for our community so that they are able to get all of this information in more ways than one. I know a lot of the times we have, we've referred to handbooks or emails, but you know, having another piece that's that someone can listen to you on their own time or while they're planning or any way that they can get the information is important. I'm also having campus base or hosting campus based presentations, so I'll be going out. I've already had a couple of principals reach out to me about coming to do a presentation around TIA for their faculty and staff. And then we also have you know the web page I mentioned earlier. But other ways that we are trying to create engagement is also creating recruiting materials or using social media to inform the Community, help recruit people to our district because ultimately it's a great place to be and you know for teachers to have the opportunity, you know 387 of 1200 districts and we're one of them. So they know that this is a place they can come. So all of these

ways, you know moving forward or is how we're going to continue to communicate, engage with our community and educate them. So when you think about long-term, Dr Medina, what does that look like for a teacher incentive allotment?

**Fernando Medina:** Well, as we talked about earlier, we have a new set of eligible areas and that will collect data from this year. The Curriculum department will start also identifying how we can develop growth measures in other areas such as Fine Arts, athletics, etc. And because they're not involved in STAAR, so they would have to come up with either pre or post test in those areas or perhaps a portfolio and then pilot those. So they are going to develop those this year. They'll pilot them next year with the goal or the vision of them then being in place in 24-25, I believe it is. And that's, yeah, that's kind of the long range plan. So we are going to take it one step at a time, but we want to be very intentional and we want to be certain that we get it right.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah. Well, thank you so much for giving us all of that information and I think it's great that our district is participating in TIA, what a great opportunity for our teachers. Kevin, thank you so much for joining us today.

**Kevin Malandrucolo:** Thank you for having me.

**Mary Torres:** Yeah, being part of it ultimately and definitely being part of our team. Because that is really we need you, Kevin and Dr. Medina. Thank you as well. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

**Fernando Medina:** No, I think that's it. Mary, thank you. Alright, for being a wonderful host. we'll see you at the grocery store.