



The University of Texas
University Charter School System

UT Elementary Charter School
Teacher Incentive Allotment Handbook

2025-2026 School Year

Teacher Incentive Allotment Handbook
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
2025-2026

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Introduction, Rationale and Description

Introduction

The Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program was created by the Texas Legislature as part of House Bill 3 to provide a realistic pathway for top teachers to earn six-figure salaries and to help attract and retain highly effective teachers at traditionally hard-to-staff schools (Teacher Incentive Allotment, 2021). This handbook details the Teacher Incentive Allotment program to be implemented by The University of Texas Elementary School (UTES). This handbook is published for the 2025-2026 school year, UTES's fourth year of participation in the TIA. This handbook is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Rationale for Participation

Located in historic East Austin, UTES is a single-campus charter school that serves a diverse student body of just over 300 students each year. The student body is composed of Limited English Proficient, Low-Income, and Special Education students. UTES wants only the best for our students and our teaching staff has shown not only their success but also their commitment to students during the challenges of the last two academic years. To retain the teachers who have served our students so well, our strategic planning process identified a need to focus on teacher retention.

In Austin, UTES competes with several prestigious surrounding ISDs and charter schools for the best-experienced teachers. Since participation in the TIA program aligns with the mission of UTES to serve as an exemplary education program for diverse learners and provide a means to retain our best teachers; UTES staff, leadership, and stakeholders decided to investigate TIA as an addition to the retention and recruitment efforts of UTES.

After learning more about the TIA program, several discussions with our board, administration, teachers, parents, and community supporters resulted in UTES's choice to participate in TIA as a means of providing recognition for those most effective teachers and an incentive to stay and grow at UTES. By offering a financial incentive for our teachers, the TIA supplements the teacher salaries offered by UTES so that the efforts of the best are rewarded and that the best teachers remain at UTES.

Description

The UTES TIA for the 2025-2026 school year involves both a Teacher Observation and a Student Growth component. This handbook will be published annually and made available to all teachers prior to the beginning of each school year. Teachers will receive annual TIA training as a part of the beginning of the year, pre-service training.



Teacher Eligibility and Weighting

Teacher Eligibility

Only teachers who meet the criteria below are eligible for TIA designation. To be eligible teachers must:

- Have a current Standard Teaching Certificate issued by the State Board of Educator Certification in good standing;
- Be employed by UTES as a classroom teacher (PEIMS Role code 087) before the 2025-2026 Snapshot date;
- Be assigned to at least 5 students that are a) enrolled before the 2024-2025 Snapshot date and b) take both the pre/post-tests; and
- Have a completed Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) observation (as defined in the T-TESS section of this handbook) per the T-TESS Implementation Dates published in Appendix A of this handbook.

Weighting

In the calculation of the UTES TIA, the Teacher Observation component is weighted 50% and the Student Growth component is weighted 50%.



Teacher Observation Component

Observation Overview

UTES employs the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System as the teacher observation tool for the teacher observation component of the TIA. UTES implements the T-TESS per the [T-TESS Implementation Guidebook](#) posted on teachfortexas.org. Additionally, UTES sends all teaching staff an implementation calendar: complete with action items, due dates, and detailed information on each component of T-TESS (see Appendix A). Each year, teachers must have a minimum of four full-scored observations: 2 formal and 2 informal walkthroughs. Additional unscored observations can be conducted as needed. UTES requires a total of four scores for each dimension of the rubric. There will be no appraisal waivers for any TIA-eligible teachers. UTES's T-TESS appraisal system complies with Texas Education Code §21.351 and §21.352.

Though the T-TESS has a total of four domains, only Domain 2 (Instruction) and Domain 3 (Learning Environment) are considered for the TIA teacher observation score. After the final T-TESS scores have been calculated for each teacher, Domain 2 and Domain 3 scores will be averaged to create a Teacher Observation Score for each eligible teacher.

The UTES TIA is aligned to the Texas Education Agency's required performance standards for teacher designations. Per the TEA, for a teacher to receive a designation, they must have a minimum average domain score and a minimum rating for each dimension in Domain 2 and Domain 3. The table below displays the minimum scores for each:

Designation Level	Minimum Average Score Across Domain 2 and 3	Minimum Rating Required for each Dimension in Domain 2 and 3
Recognized	3.7 (74% of possible points)	At least 3 (proficient) on all dimensions
Exemplary	3.9 (78% of possible points)	At least 3 (proficient) on all dimensions
Master	4.5 (90% of possible points)	At least 3 (proficient) on all dimensions

Appraisers

Two appraisers (Principal and Instructional Administrator) will complete all appraisals at the campus. They are required to be T-TESS certified and are required to recertify every three years. Additionally, the district T-TESS Coordinator oversees certification compliance, training and calibration of all appraisers. Training requirements for each appraiser include:

- Attend Region XIII training
- Participate in two Appraiser Refresh trainings that review T-TESS domains, dimensions, scripting, feedback, and calibration exercises, and
- Perform calibration exercises prior to scheduling formal observations.

Appraisers meet collaboratively with the T-TESS Coordinator each quarter to evaluate teacher observation data, specifically looking for any skew in the data. Data will be reviewed by the appraiser, grade level, and content area. The T-TESS Coordinator will facilitate this analysis and share all information with campus-based teacher appraisers. Instances of perceived skew may result in second appraisals being conducted on some teachers.

Appraiser Training, Certification and Recertification Deadlines

- Proof of certification (or recertification every three years) is due to the T-TESS coordinator prior to August 1 of each school year.
- Annual ESC Region XIII T-TESS training, including recalibration to the scoring rubric, is due prior to the Self-Assessment Goal Setting Due Date for Teachers.
- Appraiser Refresh training is due by November 1 and February 1 of each school year. Appraiser Refresh training includes training, reviewing T-TESS domains, dimensions, scripting, and feedback and calibration exercises.
- Before scheduling formal observations, appraisers meet to complete calibration exercises.

Observation Data

Observation data is collected by appraisers and uploaded into the T-TESS System using the DMAC® Solutions Platform with data points that allow for effective disaggregation by grade level, subject, and teacher demographics. UTES appraiser supervisor reviews teacher observation data at least three times per school year. Observation data is compared in three ways: (1) among raters to ensure calibration, (2) with the previous year's data to identify outliers, and (3) with student performance data to detect any incongruence and to compare with all other teachers. Skewed data presents itself as significantly or consistently higher or lower data points.

Because UTES has utilized T-TESS for several years, the school has built a repository of

teacher observation data for annual comparisons. This data has been reviewed by the UTES T-TESS Coordinator and appraisers, and previous skew or other areas of concern in observations have been well documented. After each observation, the data is compared to the repository and reviewed for the trends identified above, as well as by individual teachers. If the distribution of scores in any area is significantly higher or lower than previous trends, the data is examined and discussed to identify the root causes of the skew. If the skew is attributed to the scoring of a particular appraiser, that appraiser is provided with additional support. If the root cause is determined to be a misalignment with the rubric, improper evidence collection, or a lack of calibration among appraisers, all appraisers receive additional support. When the root cause is identified and agreed upon by consensus among the T-TESS Coordinator and appraisers (e.g., one appraiser is not calibrated to the rubric), additional training and support are provided by campus T-TESS experts, along with further calibration and training exercises from Region XIII.

Observation Data and Student Growth Data

Each year, UTES conducts a review to assess how teacher observation results align with student growth data. Specifically, student growth is calculated for each teacher and the teacher's observation scores are compared. For an easy visual comparison, teacher-student growth scores are graphed against teacher observation scores using a scatterplot graph. A line of best fit is overlaid on the scatterplot, and teacher observation and growth scores that deviate most from this line are reviewed. During the review, the T-TESS Coordinator and appraisers look for trends among the outliers, considering factors such as appraiser, subject, grade level, instructional style, and teacher demographics.

The T-TESS Coordinator and appraisers work collaboratively to identify the underlying causes of any lack of correlation between teacher observation data and student growth data. At the end of each school year, the scatterplot of teacher observation and student growth data allows for the teachers with the weakest and strongest correlations to be identified. Then, trends in the appraiser, grade level, subject area, and demographic are examined so that the root cause can be identified. The key to the root cause determination is external validation of student growth scores to STAAR scores and progress measures. In the student growth calculation procedures, the T-TESS coordinator and appraisers compare STAAR performance to student performance on the pre/post-test. If there is a weak correlation, the test is identified as a root cause and procedures are in place to improve the test.

Lack of correlation is addressed in multiple ways depending on the root cause. If the root cause is test validity, the test is reviewed and improved per the procedures in the Student Growth section. If the root cause is a problem with appraiser scores being skewed by instructional practices, a lack of appraiser calibration, or other observational issues; the T-TESS coordinator and appraisers formulate a plan for additional training and calibration exercises over the summer with additional training and exercises implemented throughout the school year to improve observation scoring.



Student Growth

Student Growth Component

For several years, UTES has successfully used the STAAR-released tests as pre/post-tests to monitor student progress, provide student support, and guide instruction. When TIA was presented to our stakeholder group, the pre/post-tests were seen as a way to seamlessly transition into use for TIA while still supporting student growth. Proven to be both valid and reliable measures of student growth, the pre/post-tests have assisted teachers in improving student performance and have assisted district leadership in supporting teacher instruction. Teachers, leadership, and stakeholders chose to use pre/post-test over other measures because of TEKS alignment and because of UTES's use of the tests for both student and teacher development.

Test Creation

The pre/post-tests for TIA are created by a team comprised of content leads, interventionists, and STEAM teacher. The TIA Architect Team is responsible for the final approval of each test created by the team. STAAR-released test questions, TEKS Resource questions, and Texas Formative Assessment Resource (TFAR) questions will be used to construct the pre/post-tests for UTES. The same test is given for the pre/post-tests. Because the pre/post-tests are created from STAAR-released tests, agency-approved TEKS Resources, and agency-created TFAR, the questions are all aligned to TEKS. The TIA Architect Team is responsible for ensuring the TEKS taught in each grade level and course are tested.

Test Approval

The pre/post-test approval team is made up of the Principal, Instructional Administrator, and the Director of Academics & Professional Development. To approve the tests, the team must see evidence that each question is from a TEA-recognized source and that the test is aligned with the TEKS for each subject and grade level.

Test Security

UTES uses STAAR-released test questions, as well as TEKS Resource, DMAC, and TFAR as resources for test questions. The TIA Architect Team will be responsible for keeping the pre/post-tests secure in both electronic and paper forms, using the same protocol for STAAR test security. Staff will be trained on test security before each administration. Since some of the test questions are publicly available, the TIA Architect Team has set up a procedure to review the pre/post-test questions scores to ensure the distribution of student answers is similar to that of previous years' tests. By doing this, the TIA Architect Team can easily identify infidelity in test security.

Testing Window

To be determined before the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.

Test Administration

To administer the pre/post-tests with fidelity, UTES mimics a STAAR testing environment for each administration. To create this environment, UTES uses the protocols published in the [STAAR Grades 3-5 Testing Administrator Manual](#). Like the STAAR test, teachers are prohibited from assisting students on the exams. Students may only receive accommodations prescribed in their Individual Education Plans, just as with the STAAR test. Teachers are trained each year on the administration of the pre/post-tests.

Scoring

Immediately following their administration, the Pre/Post-tests tests are scored and stored in DMAC. After the Pre/Post-testing window is complete, the student scores are downloaded into a spreadsheet. Student scores are assigned to a teacher using the class rosters and marked as included or excluded from teachers' TIA scores. To be included in the Student Growth Score for a teacher, students must:

- Be enrolled in a teacher's classroom before the Snapshot Date;
- Complete the pre-test before the end of the published testing window with a valid test score; and
- Complete the post-test before the end of the published testing window with a valid test score.

Note - students receiving special education services are assigned to inclusion teachers based upon the classes in which they are providing services.

Within one week of completion of each test, the TIA Architect Team reviews the test scores to identify any possible skew, inconsistent testing data, or other abnormalities. If none are found, the data are dated, marked final, and saved on the UTES server.

If abnormalities are found in testing, students are either excluded from the calculation (if a one or two-student incident) or are retested if a larger interruption occurs (power outage, etc.). After investigation of the incident (including discussion with the affected teacher) and within one week of administration of tests, the TIA Architect Team will make a recommendation to exclude student scores, retest students, or make a teacher ineligible for this school year's TIA. If retests are recommended and approved, the retests must occur within one week of the final decision. The Superintendent has final approval authority over the TIA Architect Team's decision. The Superintendent will communicate final approval of the decision with the affected teachers within two days of the TIA Architect Team's decision and the affected teachers have two days to appeal the decision.

Growth Standards

UTES has adopted the TIA statewide performance standards for student growth as its own, ensuring full alignment between our plan and the TIA standards. The table below outlines the state performance standards UTES has adopted:

Growth Standard Group	% of students meeting or exceeding growth targets
Recognized	55%
Exemplary	60%
Master	70%

Growth Targets

Each year, the TIA Architect Team and test development team determine how much growth must be demonstrated for every grade level and subject area to meet a growth standard. The TIA Architect Team and test development team work together to triangulate the amount of growth required for each grade level and subject area using multiple analyses. The expertise of the administrators, content experts, and teachers on this team combines to ensure the best possible determination of growth targets for each subject area and grade level.

For tests in the STAAR-tested subjects, the team has two analyses upon which to base the growth target: a comparison of pre/post-test growth to Progress Measures and a comparison of pre/post-test growth to prior pre/post-test growth. First, the team determines which students met their Progress Measure on STAAR for a given year and their performance level. Using only the pre/post-test data for students that met their Progress Measure in each performance level (did not meet, approaches, meets, masters), an average increase in the pre/post-test questions answered correctly is calculated.

Second, the team reviews the pre/post-test growth in the current school year to pre/post-test growth given in previous years. Because UTES has administered pre- and post-tests in STAAR-tested subjects and grade levels for several years, expected growth patterns are well-documented, and a consistent distribution of growth is demonstrated annually. Using these analyses for each test and subject area, the team triangulates growth targets with confidence.

For tests in the non-STAAR-tested subjects, the team will use the following research-based assessments to determine student growth.

Prekindergarten-Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT™) is an instrument used to measure receptive (hearing) vocabulary acquisition in Standard American English of children. When combined with the expressive vocabulary measurement of the EVT, the scores provide direct comparisons and interpret vocabulary performance as it relates to oral language and the broad vocabulary basis for reading and writing.

Kindergarten-3rd grade- Reading and math growth targets will be set based on the distribution of the growth consistently demonstrated on pre/post-tests in subjects for previous years. The growth target will be set so that a similar percentage of students across the district meet their growth target, as compared to tests in STAAR-tested subjects. Because these data analyses are conducted each year, and as data is collected on the non-STAAR tested subject areas and grade level pre/post-tests, growth targets will be adjusted by the team.

For both types of pre/post-tests, the team presents findings and recommendations to be approved by the Superintendent each year. As UTES implements the TIA program, the district plans to collaborate with other local charter schools and the Education Service Center to externally validate growth results. UTES has every intention of the TIA growth metric identifying teachers of the highest quality.



Designation Score Calculation

The TIA Architect Team; including the T-TESS Coordinator, Superintendent, and the Director of Academics and Professional Development, is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and finalizing the data. The Director of Academics and Professional Development will recommend teachers for designation based upon the data and the Superintendent will give final approval to designations.

The Student Growth is weighed 50% and the Teacher Observation component is weighted 50% for the UTES TIA. Once the growth data has been finalized by the TIA Architect Team and the Superintendent, the data will be used to calculate the designation score for each teacher. Once designation scores are calculated and designations recommended, the results are presented to the Superintendent. The Superintendent finalizes the recommendations. The teachers are then notified of their designation score and their recommended designation, if any. Teachers have one week after notification to appeal the decision to the TIA Architect Team.

Teachers can submit an email describing the need for an appeal to their campus principal, who will then share it with the TIA Architect Team. The TIA Architect Team will consider all appeals and make a recommendation to the Superintendent one week following receipt of the appeal. The Superintendent will notify the TIA Architect Team and the teacher of the final appeal decision.



Spending Plan

The following document ensures UTES's compliance with Texas Education Code §48.112.

Spending Plan Development

After the first year of implementation, the TIA distribution was reviewed by teachers and other stakeholders. They were represented on the TIA Architect Team, participated in TIA information and feedback sessions, and participated in a teacher survey where they indicated their personal preferences for the distribution. The district agreed that the funds should be distributed promptly if a teacher resigns within the subsequent year. The 10% of district funds will be spent on professional development. District-level human resources and the Chief Financial Officer were involved in the development of the spending plan. The resulting Spending Plan is communicated in this section.

Distribution of Funds

In accordance with the Texas Education Code, UTES will allocate 10% of its TIA designation allotment toward professional development initiatives that support the implementation of the Teacher Incentive Allotment. Teachers who earn a designation will receive 90% of the total allotment. Teachers who receive a designation prior to joining UTES will be awarded 90% of the allotment during their first year of employment. The remaining 10% will be retained by the district to fund professional development activities aligned with the TIA. UTES will determine the total campus TIA allotment following the designation decisions made each April. At that time, the school will identify eligible recipients, including locally designated teachers, incoming teachers with prior TIA designations from other districts, and current National Board-Certified teachers. UTES will then distribute 90% of the allotment to these eligible teachers.

TIA allotment funds will supplement the existing district salary schedule and will be issued as a stipend, separate from the teacher's base salary. Teachers are notified of their designation in April, and the stipend is distributed in a single payment each summer, prior to August 31.

Teacher Mobility

If a teacher leaves the district after Winter Roster submission but before the end of the working school year, the payment to the teacher will be prorated based on the number of days worked during that school year. The remaining funds from the teacher's 90% allotment will be distributed equally to the certified teachers who remain on the campus by August 31, 2025. The district's 10% will be used according to the Texas Education Code for professional development related to the TIA.

UTES is a single-campus district. If a teacher leaves after the Class Roster Winter Submission but before the end of the school year, pay will be prorated based on the

number of days worked. The TIA stipend will be treated similarly.

National Board Certification

UTES will encourage National Board Certification (NBC) teachers to notify the district as soon as they receive their certification. Then the district will verify the NBC is listed on their Texas Teacher Certificate. These teachers will automatically qualify for Recognized status under our TIA Plan and will be eligible to receive the associated distribution.



Support for Teachers

Support for Teachers

UTES is a single-campus district. As such, its plan for supporting new designated teachers is the same for the campus and district. Due to the high poverty rate of our students and the culture and climate of our school, UTES anticipates being able to recruit TIA-designated teachers throughout the Austin area. UTES provides all new teachers with a pre-service orientation where they are assigned a teacher mentor. Throughout the year, UTES provides formal opportunities for the mentor and mentee teachers to meet during professional development days.

Additionally, the Superintendent and the Director of Academics and Professional Development are available to provide additional, specific support to TIA teachers as needed.

Recruitment and Retention

UTES will use the availability of TIA funds to recruit highly effective teachers who are either already TIA designated, or who have the talent to become designated after arriving at UTES. UTES will market our TIA program through all our digital media, including social media. UTES plans to include information on TIA in our teacher recruiting materials and highlight existing TIA-designated teachers through the district's webpage and our annual report. In addition to being placed on the TIA "map" as a TIA school, UTES will aggressively market our TIA program when hiring teachers. We will proudly display our status as a TIA school on our webpage and digital media. Recruiting materials will include information on our TIA program.

Retention of the best teachers is critical to UTES. The current plan for teacher retention includes providing a competitive compensation plan for teachers, promoting the amazing professional climate at our school, effective use of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to provide support to teachers, and high-quality professional development and growth opportunities for teachers.

UTES plans to leverage the experience and expertise of TIA-designated teachers in several ways that may lead to increased responsibility and authority. Designated teachers could be used as PLC leads and/or grade-level leaders. Designated teachers will be encouraged to submit professional development at regional, state, and national conferences. A designated teacher may also be considered for campus and district leadership positions if desired.



System Improvement and Evaluation

System Improvement

UTES will conduct a rigorous analysis of designated teachers, including but not limited to evaluating their educational background, certification type, and completed training. The idea is to use that information to help identify common indicators of teacher effectiveness and use that to inform future teacher recruitment efforts. Additionally, staffing assignments may be changed to place the most effective teachers with the students at the highest risk or in need of the most support. UTES will conduct an annual internal TIA program evaluation that will consist of teacher performance data, student growth data, and internally developed teacher surveys to monitor TIA's impact on the district. UTES will require teachers and staff to participate in the TIA program evaluation surveys.

In addition to the teacher observation and student growth data required for designating TIA teachers, UTES will also administer teacher surveys to both designated and non-designated teachers. We will evaluate teacher retention stats, satisfaction surveys, and campus and district accountability data to perform a well-rounded, thorough program evaluation. The school also plans to evaluate planning practices, organizational tools used by the teacher, curriculum resources used, and other instructional tools used by TIA-designated teachers to assist in the development of future professional development plans for the entire staff.

Program Evaluation

UTES will require each TIA-eligible teacher to participate in the TIA Annual program survey. The information provided in this survey will help UTES understand the impact of TIA on the school. In addition to the teacher observation and student growth data required for designating TIA teachers, UTES will also administer teacher surveys to both designated and non-designated teachers. We will evaluate teacher retention stats, satisfaction surveys, and campus and district accountability data to perform a well-rounded, thorough program evaluation.



Appendix A

T-TESS Implementation Calendar

T-TESS Implementation Dates 2025-2026

Action	Due Date	Details
Self-Assessment Goal Setting Completed	September 12, 2025	Documentation submitted in DMAC.
1-Formal Observation 1-Walkthrough (minimum of 2)	December 18, 2025	1 Formal Announced Observation with Pre and Post Conference 1 informal observation
1-Formal Observation 1-Walkthrough (minimum of 2)	April 23, 2026	1 Formal Unannounced Observation 1 Walkthrough (minimum)
Final Observation/ Summative Evaluation	May 8, 2026	Summative Evaluation completed in DMAC.
Final Evaluation Conference with Signed Evaluation	May 20, 2026	Final Observation Conference Completed. Print and Sign Final Evaluation
Final Observation Summaries due to Human Resource	May 27, 2026	Send to HR (Bob Micks) by EOD.