



TSTA NEWS

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TSTA: Governor overemphasizes size of likely pay raises under new selective teacher program

Gov. Greg Abbott is overselling a new selective pay program for a handful of teachers at a time when all Texas teachers are finding their professional abilities challenged and thousands are risking their health to return to classrooms while the coronavirus remains an ever-present danger.

The governor tweeted that “Texas teachers could see double-digit pay raises under new program to retain top performers. Teachers can receive ‘life-changing’ raises of up to \$32,000.”

https://twitter.com/gregabbott_tx/status/1303112282067664897

He was referring to the new Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), a program created in House Bill 3, the new school finance law, offering extra pay to encourage educator recruitment and retention, particularly in rural and high-needs districts.

In the first allocation of funds under the program, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) recently announced that it had awarded nearly \$40 million to 26 school districts and charters. The agency said about 3,600 teachers would benefit from the additional funding, figures that show Abbott’s predictions are inflated.

“Very few teachers, if any, will see raises approaching anywhere near \$32,000 under this program. Do the math,” Texas State Teachers Association President Ovidia Molina said.

If 3,600 teachers were to each get \$32,000 raises, the total cost would be \$115.20 million, almost three times the amount of funds that TEA allotted. Average raises of half that amount would cost more than \$57 million, which also is more money than TEA provided. Also, the additional funding is for limited periods, anywhere from one to five years, depending on the district, which means teachers who get raises now could see their pay reduced later if the state or districts don’t keep up the funding.

“This is not the time to single out a handful of teachers for raises, not when all of Texas’ 300,000-plus teachers have been going to extraordinary lengths to connect with and instruct their students during this health emergency. And now many of them as well as support staff have been forced to return to campuses when it is not yet safe to be there,” Molina added.

Because of additional funding appropriated by the Legislature in 2019, average teacher pay in Texas increased by 5.5 percent to \$57,091 during the 2019-20 school year. But that was still more than \$6,500 less than the national average, ranking Texas 26th among the states and the District of Columbia, a National Education Association survey found.

TIA funds go to campuses that have teachers who have been rated as the most successful under evaluation standards established by the district and approved by TEA. School districts can give raises only to the selected teachers or spread out the additional money among all the teachers at their campuses.

Here is the TEA announcement: <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/news-releases/news-2020/a-signature-part-of-hb-3-in-its-inaugural-year-the-teacher-incentive-allotment-will-benefit-more-than-3600-texas-teachers>