

Slide 1: On behalf of the Texas Education Agency and the School Improvement Resource Center, welcome to the Cycle 2 Texas Title I Priority Schools Grant Overview Session “Bold Choices for a Bright Future”. You are currently viewing module 2

Slide 2: This session is being presented to you by TEA’s Division of No Child Left Behind and the School Improvement Resource Center, a Texas Initiative at Region XIII Education Service Center which offers technical assistance to schools in improvement.

My name is Cody Huie I am Project Coordinator for the TTIPS grant at SIRC

Once grant awards have been announced in July, I along with my colleagues at SIRC will be providing Technical Assistance with the 4 intervention models, associated Training and Resources, and overseeing the implementation of the State’s Design for each TTIPS Option

Slide 3: You are currently watching Module 2 of a 4 part series.

This module covers closure and restart.

Slide 4: Before we go any further, if you have not printed the handouts for this module, please do so now.

In order to pause the presentation at any time, press the up arrow. To resume play, simply press the down arrow to start again.

Slide 5: Now that you have your handouts printed let’s begin our discussion of the TTIPS Model Closure and Restart.

Our discussion of each model will follow the same structure.

1. First we will discuss The “**Big Picture**” **View** – which will entail discussing each model in a general sense
2. Then we will move on to **Requirements and Permissible Activities** or the “Musts” and “Mays” as we call them, during which we will address the grant requirements and guidelines.
3. Following that I will cover a **Summary of the Texas Design** in which I will detail the support that SIRC will provide if you opt to partner with us
4. And finally we will offer **District Considerations** take if choosing the specific model

Slide 6: *15-20 minutes (show folder)* Let’s begin talking about the four options by specifically talking about Closure - definitely the most difficult and challenging and perhaps most painful option for the community – all which must be considered when embarking upon strategies to close

Slide 7: School closure is defined as **Closing the School and enrolling the students who attended the school in other higher achieving schools within the LEA.** Higher achieving is critical – there has to be higher achieving schools for this option (see the handout called narrowing questions)

Unique to closure, this grant award is limited to one year. Funds can only be used for reasonable and necessary costs associated with closing a school

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Slide 8: The theory, according to the Center on innovation and improvement, behind closing a school is this:

According to multiple measures (for example, academic performance, school culture/expectations, teacher performance, or facilities) school capacity *is so low* as to prevent a reasonable expectation of dramatic improvement for students currently enrolled. Therefore, closing the school and transitioning students to a higher performing school is the best strategy to dramatically improve their academic outcomes

Slide 9: An LEA can use the required interventions handout to develop their own Closure model. If an LEA is considering developing their own model, you might consider contacting your local Education Service Center for support.

LEA Designed campuses will be provided a case manager at SIRC to answer questions about grant activities and a professional service provider or (PSP) to help the campus meet grant requirements.

Slide 10: LEAs not choosing to design their own model have the option of choosing the TEA designed closure model the Texas' support for districts focuses on a protocol of researched procedures used to guide an LEA through analyzing, communicating, and implementing the closure of a campus to enrolling the students who attended the campus in other, higher-achieving campuses within the LEA.

Components of the Texas design for closure include:

**A district snapshot and campus snapshot (if applicable) to assist districts with an in-depth analysis and comprehensive needs assessment of a district and potentially closing campus' particular situation

**Also, we're excited to be working on a community snapshot to assist with gaining a comprehensive picture of the community context

**A closure specialist will be provided to the district to assist with the process

**Also, each district will have also have a case manager at SIRC to further assist with the closure process and reporting requirements, as well as guidance through:

**A closure toolkit, which would include action plans, timelines, and resources for:

Engaging and assessing the community

Thoughtfully communicating

Reassigning LEA boundaries

Budgeting and facility/equipment issues

Evaluating, selecting, and building the capacity of higher-achieving schools, and

Student and staff transitions

Additional Opportunities that are required of LEA choosing the Texas Closure Support include

Attendance at the Texas School Improvement Conference (TSI) in Austin. This conference focuses on school improvement research and best practices.

District Institute (district personnel only)- this institute looks at innovative ways that districts can better support campuses in need of improvement through research and developing new systems and processes

Slide 11: Other Handouts

Please pay careful attention to the handout Closure Technical Assistance and Associated Costs.

This document has been created for all four options to provide districts with a big picture view of the technical assistance and resources provided by SIRC for those choosing the LEA Design, or those choosing to work with SIRC with the TEA design.

This document was created in order to help guide the design of TTIPS budgets that meet the requirements of the grant.

Pay particular attention to what is required or not required for the TEA or LEA designs, as well as what costs are included at no cost to the LEA versus the costs that are the LEA's responsibility.

One example would be the onsite technical assistance provided by a **Closure** specialist, this is required for both the TEA and LEA design at no cost to the LEA.

Another example would be.... If choosing the TEA Designed Closure model.

The Campus Snapshot

This is required for the TEA Design in the 1st year at no cost to the LEA.

This is NOT Required for the LEA Design, but available at an estimated cost to the LEA of \$7,000 to \$10,000.

We feel these handouts will be invaluable to the LEAs as they consider intervention models and budgeting, so please take the time to study the ones applying to options under consideration by the LEA.

Slide 12: We want to emphasize the importance of developing a closure and communication criteria for your campus and community, based on your district wide data analysis. This closure and communication criteria should be developed by the LEA through the involvement of all stakeholders. We can learn a lot from public school districts such as Pittsburgh, Chicago, Denver, and Portland. There have been several instances where community opponents have halted the school closure process altogether.

We have provided you with a resource list where you will find more researched best practices for closure procedures.

The center on Innovation and Improvement conducted a study of four districts embarking upon school closure process – here are their key points of consideration for districts.

****Number one - Establish policy context for closure.** Strategically decide if closing a school is a feasible and necessary option, by considering such things as how will closing low-achieving schools contribute to the larger district reform efforts? To what extent have current (or past) school interventions led to improved school performance in persistently low achieving schools, and which schools have not improved despite repeated interventions and increased resources? The final question, which schools, if any, are having a negative impact on students' academic achievement?

****Second key point, establish clear procedures and decision criteria.** Include key stakeholders, including business and community leaders, in developing criteria for closing schools. Develop a consistent and data-based method of assessing school performance, such as a performance index, that supplements state-level academic achievement data and that is uniformly applied to the schools across the district.

****The next key consideration, operate transparently.** Communicate the decision to close schools, through ongoing and upfront communication with the school board or school committee members. Communicate by keeping the district leadership and school board unified (for example: asking the

school board members to vote on a slate of closures, rather than individual school closures). Also, by developing and articulating a clear rationale for the school closure, including the immediate benefit that students will receive as a result of the school closure.

Slide 13: ****The next key consideration is to plan for transition.** Plan for orderly transition of students AND staff in both closing school and receiving schools. Develop and implement a transition plan for students and staff. Create options and ensure immediate placement of displaced students. Communicate directly (for example, face-to-face) with families of all displaced students. Take proactive measures to communicate with staff and plan for transitioning displaced staff and also other assets of the community and/or school.

****The last consideration to share would be Methodical planning and implementation.** There are steps that districts can take to *diminish* the extent of the challenges and obstacle that will surface when using the closing schools strategy (Steiner, 2009).

Embed school closure decisions in broader district reform strategy.

Develop a supply of higher-performing school options.

Make certain that data guides decision-making at all stages of the process.

Clearly explain the benefits of closure to students currently enrolled in the low-achieving schools.

Provide support to students and family during transition to new, higher performing schools.

Clarify receiving principals role in transition, and

Provide staff members with clear information about the closure process

Slide 14: The following are the Center on Innovation and Improvement's Pitfalls to avoid:

Avoid **failing to communicate urgency** due to persistent low-achievement.

Avoid the **perception that closure criteria are subjective or driven by an alternative agenda.**

Avoid **public disagreement between school board members about closure**; in other words, present a united front.

Avoid the **belief that students are better served in persistently low-achieving schools** than in higher performing alternatives. Help them see that students will be better off.

Avoid **reversing course in the face of opposition.** Don't back-pedal, follow-through. Don't bow to one community group over another.

Avoid **permitting opposition to "control the story."** Districts should craft the story that conveys the urgency and that this is the best course. Opposition cannot control the story.

Finally, avoid **failing to prepare for and support transition for key stakeholders** (i.e., students, families, principals, and teachers)

Slide 15: 25-30 minutes

(Show folder) Now let's move on to our second intervention option - Restart, perhaps the most difficult to understand of the four options

Slide 16: Restart is when an "LEA **closes** a school and **re-opens** under the management of a charter school operator, charter management organization or an education management organization, those are CMOs and EMOs, that has been **selected through a rigorous review process**. Though we will further discuss the rigorous review process, we would like to emphasize that this is one of the most critical aspects of restarting.

According to the guidance the "rigorous review process" permits an LEA to examine a prospective restart operator's reform plans and strategies. It helps prevent an operator from assuming control of a school without having a meaningful plan for turning it around. The purpose of the rigorous review process is to provide an LEA with an opportunity to ensure that the operator will use the model to make meaningful changes in a school. Through the rigorous review process, an LEA might, for example, require that prospective operator to demonstrate that its strategies are research-based and that it has capacity to implement the strategies it is proposing.

Slide 17: The specifics of Restart can get complicated so let's look more closely at the options available to a Restart campus.

The main difference within Restart is who the district is holding accountable and who the performance contract is with.

As is indicated on the left-hand side of the chart, if the school converts to a charter (status), governance transitions to a **Charter school board** (a non-profit organization legally responsible for running the school). This board may function as an Independent operator or hire an EMO or CMO.

As is indicated on the right side of this chart, Performance Contracting means hiring an EMO or a CMO.

Slide 18: That brings up a question or two. What is a CMO? And what is an EMO?

A CMO is a non-profit organization that operates or manages a charter school by centralizing or sharing certain functions and resources among schools.

Examples: Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), Achievement First, Uncommon Schools, Aspire, and Green Dot,

An EMO is a for-profit or non-profit organization that provides “whole school operation” services in multiple regions.

Examples: Edison Schools, Mosaica Education, National Heritage Academies, Nobel Learning Communities

Don't be discouraged if you're confused, lines are easily and regularly blurred between the two types of organizations.

Slide 19: Here's the basic philosophy of restart according to the National Association of Charter School authorizers (or NACSA): Choosing the Restart models allows for global, comprehensive change in operations in the form of new staff/new leaders and a completely new culture, and grants a campus the authority/autonomy to be innovative in their approach to educating students in the form of staffing, management policies, instruction, parent relations, schedule, and discipline.

Slide 20: Our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, explains it like this:

The charter movement is one of the most profound changes in American education—bringing new options to underserved communities and introducing competition and innovation into the education system. Across America we see great charter schools, from Noble Street in Chicago to IDEA Academy in Texas, Inner-City Education Foundation and Partnerships to Uplift Communities in Los Angeles and Friendship Public Charter Schools in D.C . . We have great charter networks like Aspire, KIPP, Achievement First and Uncommon Schools. You're steadily getting to scale. Today, I am challenging you to adapt your educational model to turning around our lowest-performing schools.”

—Arne Duncan, June 22, 2009, Speech at the National Charter School Conference

Slide 21: Let's talk about the requirements or “Musts” of Restart.

**The provider must be selected from the TEA Approved List. As an additional safeguard to ensure only quality providers are serving our schools, TEA has submitted an RFQ to attract and select quality providers. LEAs must choose potential providers from the TEA selected pool of providers.

**Secondly, the restart school must enroll, within the grades it serves, all former students who wish to attend the school. However, it is not required for providers to serve all grades previously served. It is

common for a provider to choose to slowly re-integrate one grade level at a time, or to choose to serve only select grade levels. In our handout of narrowing questions we address this – because if the provider chooses not to serve all grade levels currently being served at the school, does the LEA have the capacity to serve the remaining students? If no, then the provider must agree to serve all current grade levels for Restart to be a viable option.

But keep in mind another quote from Arne Duncan: “Too often, charter schools take an incremental approach of starting a new school one grade at a time – an approach that is too gradual to have an immediate impact in dropout factories and other schools that are seriously underperforming.”

A Restart school must enroll, within the grades it serves, all former students who wish to attend the school. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that restarting the school benefits the population of students who would be served by the absence of the “restarting” school.

Slide 22: Another requirement, the provider must be selected through a rigorous selection process.

The importance of the “rigorous selection process” was alluded to previously. Research indicates that the *authorization process*, which includes the selection phase, is the most crucial part of collaborating with an external provider.

Another Duncan quote: “The charter movement is putting itself at risk by allowing too many second-rate and third-rate operators to exist,” he said. “Charter authorizers need to do a better job of holding schools accountable – or people will, by leaving.”

The National Association of Charter School Authorizers (or NACSA) has identified a set of principles and standards for charter school authorizing which includes an application process.

**According to NACSA a quality authorizer implements a comprehensive application process that follows fair procedures, a rigorous criteria, and grants charters only to those developers who demonstrate strong capacity for establishing and operating a quality charter school.

Laura Rhim in a webinar prepared for the Center on Innovation and Improvement suggested that LEAs create a rubric

**consisting of three components (Academic Achievement, Fiscal and Operational Records, and Potential) to assess EMO/CMO quality.

**Another requirement of restart is that the contract must include terms and provisions to hold the provider accountable for complying with final requirements as a grant. As was mentioned previously, this would be part of the authorization process, and should be addressed during the development of the performance contract or terms of the agreement. Guidance reminds us that an LEA should bear this

accountability requirement in mind at the time of contracting with the charter school operator, CMO, or EMO, and should consider how best to reflect it in the contract or agreement.

Slide23: We're now switching gears to activities that are considered Permissible for Restart, as opposed to the "Musts" we just covered; these are the "MAYS."

****The LEA has the flexibility to work with providers to develop an appropriate sequence and timetable.** With regards to a Restart school serving fewer grades than served by the original school, the guidance on that is an LEA has flexibility to work with providers to develop the appropriate sequence and timetable for a restart partnership, but do note that research indicates a minimum of three to six months planning time for the provider before opening a new school.

****Another permissible activity - Restart campuses may implement activities described in the final requirements with respect to all other models.** This is about whether a school implementing Restart may implement activities of a turnaround model or transformation model. A Restart operator has considerable flexibility not only with respect to the school improvement activities it will undertake, but also with respect to the type of school program it will offer. The Restart model is specifically intended to give operators the flexibility and freedom to implement their own reform plans and strategies.

****The LEA may choose the Restart option prior to selecting a provider.** Prior to submitting its application for SIG funds, an LEA does not need to know the particular EMO or CMO with which it would contract to Restart a school, but it should at least have a pool of potential partners that have expressed an interest in and have exhibited an ability to restart the school in which the LEA proposes to implement the restart model. A contract does not have to be signed to receive funds, but enough information in the application must be provided to TEA for them to be confident that, if awarded SIG funds, the LEA would in fact enter into a contract with a CMO or EMO to implement the Restart model.

****The last is a permissible activity - Restart campus may choose to serve fewer grades than previously served.** An LEA has flexibility to work with providers to develop the appropriate sequence and timetable for a restart partnership. So, for example, an LEA could allow a Restart operator to take over one grade in a school at a time. If this is the case, then the LEA must ensure that the SIG funds it receives for the school are used only for the grades being served by the Restart operator, unless the LEA is implementing one of the other SIG models with respect to the other grades served by the school.

Slide 24: An LEA can use the required interventions handout to develop their own Restart model. If an LEA is considering developing their own model, you might consider contacting your local Education Service Center for support.

LEA Designed campuses will be provided a case manager at SIRC to answer questions about grant activities and a professional service provider or (PSP) to help the campus meet grant requirements.

Slide 25: LEAs not choosing to design their model have the option of choosing the TEA Designed Restart Model.

Texas Restart Support will include Technical assistance and resources provided by SIRC in the broad categories of people and products, processes, and PD. People include case management by TTIPS staff to help ensure smooth restart implementation and more importantly an on-site restart specialist known as a Professional Service Provider.

Products and processes and PD include campus, district, and community snapshots to assist in conducting a truly comprehensive needs assessment; also LEA and/or Campus site visits to assist in the restart process, and a Restart toolkit

Slide 26: The Restart Toolkit will include resources/support in the areas of ...

Community Engagement

Developing a Request for Proposal (RFP)

The Application/Selection Process

Performance Contracting

Incubation

Performance Monitoring, and

Renewal Decision-making

Slide 27: Additional Opportunities that are required of LEAs choosing the Texas Restart Support include

Attend Texas School Improvement Conference (TSI) in Austin. This conference focuses on school improvement research and best practices.

Also, attendance at the District Institute (district personnel only)- this institute looks at innovative ways that districts can better support campuses in need of improvement through research and developing new systems and processes

Slide 28: Other Handouts

Please pay careful attention to the handout Restart Technical Assistance and Associated Costs.

This document has been created for all four options to provide districts with a big picture view of the technical assistance and resources provided by SIRC for those choosing the LEA Design, or those choosing to work with SIRC with the TEA design.

This document was created in order to help guide the design of TTIPS budgets that meets the requirements of the grant.

Pay particular attention to what is required or not required for the TEA or LEA designs, as well as what costs are included at no cost to the LEA versus the costs that are the LEA's responsibility.

One example would be the onsite technical assistance provided by a **Restart** specialist, this is required for both the TEA and LEA design and at no cost to the LEA.

Another example would be.... If choosing the TEA Designed Restart model.

The Principal/Leader Competency Review Process:

This is NOT required for the TEA Design in the 1st Year, but is an option for the LEA at no cost

This NOT required for the LEA Design, but is available at an estimated cost of \$3,500

We feel these handouts will be invaluable to LEAs as they consider intervention models and budgeting, so please take the time to study the ones applying to options under consideration by the LEA.

Slide 29: Through research done by the staff at SIRC, we have identified what we feel are the key components to successfully restarting a campus, and are prepared to provide services within these areas to LEAs who would like our assistance. So this is Restart in a "nutshell" :

Step 1: **Determine if Restart is the right option** –We have included in your handouts a set of *Narrowing Questions* and *Questions for Consideration*. These handouts are designed to assist the decision-making team and the LEA in determining which of the four options is best for the campus.

Step 2: **Engage the Community and Parents** – Though restarting a school holds an undeniable potential to positively impact students, this process also possesses the potential to face resistance from the community and parents. Informing the parents and community of the benefits, and engaging both parties in an open dialogue will be critical to the success of the restart campus.

Step 3: **Find potential providers** – Finding the right provider that is suited to meet the unique needs of your students is the ultimate goal of the restart process. TEA has issued an RFQ with the intent of ensuring only high quality providers will be partnering with schools throughout the state. As an LEA you will be required to select a provider from this pool.

Step 4: **Select a provider** – After selecting a handful of potential providers, the LEA moves onto the interview phase. Research indicates that two keys components to a successful selection process are rigor and transparency. To guarantee success, the interview process should be a multistage process during which the LEA will communicate its needs in an attempt to capture whether or not the provider is the right fit. This initial phase will establish the focus for the working relationship between the LEA and the provider. The LEA must have a candid conversation with the potential provider about all aspects of the current culture and climate. Additionally, the LEA is attempting to establish whether or not the provider has the capacity to meet the specific needs of the students.

Step 5: **Contract or Establish the Terms of Agreement** – Once the LEA has selected a provider a contract will be negotiated between the two parties. The contract establishes the expectations of the LEA, the autonomy that will be given to the provider, accountability measures/performance metrics, a timetable, and the working relationship between the LEA and the provider. The greater the level of specificity established in the initial contract the greater likelihood of success. It is also be important in the initial negotiations that a process for amending the terms of the contract is established.

Step 6: **Incubation** – Incubation is the time between when the provider is selected and when the Restart campus is opened. During this phase the LEA should offer guidance, support, a work area, and resources to the provider.

Step 7: **Monitoring progress**

Step 8: **Renewing/Dismissing Providers**

Slide30: The following are a list of pitfalls to avoid created by the center on innovation and improvement

**Avoid Weak charter statute that limits charter schools' operational autonomy

Avoid Language requiring the majority of teachers to approve conversion to charter status

**Avoid Inequitable charter school funding statutes

Avoid Prescriptive district procurement procedures that preclude merit-based selection of restart providers

**Avoid Inhibiting autonomy that leads to inhibiting implementation of the CMO/EMO or charter school model

Avoid “*Conventional wisdom*” about the degree of prescription outlined in collective bargaining agreement

**Avoid Weak/bureaucratic—as opposed to performance based—provider selection procedures

Avoid Ambiguous relationship terms

**Avoid Failure to consistently implement effective instructional practices

Avoid undefined accountability metrics

**Avoid Absence of consequences for failure to meet performance goals

Slide 31: This concludes Module 2 of the 4 part series for the Texas TTIPS grant Overview session.

For more information, please visit TEA’s discretionary grants page. We also encourage you to watch all 4 modules before completing your TTIPS Grant Application.

Thank you!