

March 18, 2025

Members of the Houston ISD Board of Managers and Superintendent Miles,

EdTrust and the 12 undersigned organizations respectfully request that the Houston ISD board approve the Teacher Excellence System (TES), and that the administration consider our recommendations to ensure successful implementation. Since teacher effectiveness is the most significant in-school factor influencing student achievement, improving how educators are evaluated and supported is the most effective way to improve educational outcomes.

In 2021, the HISD board adopted T-TESS for the first time. Prior to that adoption, 90% of the district's teachers were rated as "effective" or "highly effective" despite 41% of students reading on grade level.¹ Since then, the district has continued to refine and utilize its teacher evaluation system to retain our most effective teachers. Last year, teachers rated proficient or higher under T-TESS were retained at higher rates than their peers, with 78% of "proficient" and 89% of "distinguished" educators remaining in the district compared to 35% of educators rated as "improvement needed."²

As proposed, TES builds on this progress by incorporating key evidence based practices:

- **Calibration** to ensure rigor, fairness, and consistency and timely and balanced feedback for all teachers.
- **Student Outcome data** to ensure all teachers are evaluated on appropriate subject and student learning objectives that value both growth and proficiency data.
- **Distinguished Teacher Review** process to offer teachers the opportunity to articulate and demonstrate their professional contributions beyond their student data.

As Houston ISD begins system-wide implementation in Year 1, we urge the administration to carefully consider opportunities to ensure effective and sustainable implementation of TES and respectfully recommend the following:

- **Fidelity to Implementation** – Uphold consistency and accuracy in executing the system as designed to maintain its integrity and intended impact.
 - Ensure calibration remains consistent and robust to sustain accurate, fair, and comparable evaluation across the district.
 - Maintain rubrics and methodology for the school year as communicated. Implement and communicate future changes through a continuous improvement model as outlined below.
- **Continuous Improvement** – Clearly define the process for future changes to improve the system from the outset, ensuring that all stakeholders have a comprehensive understanding of its structure and timeline.

¹ Houston ISD. (2019). [Goal Progress Monitoring Report](#).

² Houston ISD. (2024). [Regular Board Meeting](#).

- Monitor and Adjust the System – Annually evaluate the data and system, making necessary modifications to improve its effectiveness while maintaining alignment with overall goals.
- Provide Effective Notice of Adjustments – Provide notice to all system stakeholders of any proposed modifications to the system in the school year prior to implementation, providing transparency and allowing all teachers and appraisers to adapt accordingly.
- Establish Clear Channels for Feedback – Create structured opportunities for teachers and appraisers to share their challenges, concerns, and suggestions regarding the system. We recommend using a scaled-down version of the feedback process used to design the system, leveraging anonymous surveys as part of the annual continuous improvement monitoring and focus groups for direct feedback on proposed changes. This feedback loop should be both accessible and actionable.
- Designate TES Ambassadors – Assign two TES ambassadors per campus who will serve as key points of contact for ensuring consistent implementation, addressing concerns, and facilitating a seamless feedback process with minimum disruption to their current role.
- **Distinguished Teacher Review** – Allow self-nominations in addition to the principal nominations.

By integrating these recommendations, HISD can foster a more structured and transparent system that continually improves to benefit all teachers and students. Approval of TES will also keep the district on track for state approval to participate in the Teacher Incentive Allotment, unlocking millions of state dollars to directly compensate, reward, and retain highly effective teachers.³

Sincerely,



**Houston Area
Urban League**



**children
atRisk**



**GOOD
REASON
HOUSTON**

**TEACH
forHOUSTON.ORG**



**East End
Communities**

**TEACH
+PLUS** | 



**Teach For
America**
Houston

³ Texas Education Agency (2024). [The Teacher Incentive Allotment Annual Report 2023-24](#).