

# Education Stimulus Funds

## Texas

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the United States government has allocated over \$100 billion in stimulus funding to transform our education system. The key reform areas of ARRA include adopting national standards and assessments, recruiting and rewarding effective teachers and principals, turning around low performing schools, and building data systems that measure students' success.

### ***Texas Steps Up***

In response to ARRA, The Texas Education Agency (TEA) has introduced a new initiative, called Texas "Steps Up." The goal of the initiative is to boost student achievement through school improvement and strategic reform in Texas. The initiative will reward school districts who elect to use their allotted ARRA State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) funds for selected activities that support the reform areas of ARRA.

TEA has identified 10 Steps Up activities that follow the key reform areas of ARRA and help districts reach the goal of improved student achievement. TEA is encouraging districts to consider these Steps Up activities in planning how to invest their SFSF funds. Districts that invest their available SFSF funds in these activities will be considered to have "stepped up" to the challenge to effectively address education reform in Texas.

### ***Benefits of the Steps Up Initiative***

Through 2011, any district that Steps Up and uses their available SFSF allotment to invest in one or more of the 10 Steps Up activities will receive a Steps Up designation and be eligible for the benefits listed in the table below.

<b>Benefits of Participation</b>		
First Step	51%-65% of your SFSF allotment	Additional priority points on any eligible TEA competitive discretionary grant
Second Step	56%-80% of your SFSF allotment	Access to technical assistance resources to help with multiple program design and implementation
Third Step	81%-100% of your SFSF allotment	Priority consideration for additional funding when ARRA funds lapse

### ***How Can My District Step Up?***

A Steps Up district is one that invests its SFSF funds into one or more of the 10 Steps Up activities that would result in a new program for the district, or the expansion or enhancement of an existing program.

## Steps Up Activities

The 10 Steps Up activities outlined by TEA are as follows:

Steps Up Activities	
Provide technology to create 21 <sup>st</sup> century classrooms, libraries and schools	Establish and support a new professional development paradigm
Reward demonstrated effectiveness	Improve or replace human resources process and data systems
Provide resources necessary for language other than English in elementary grades	Build enhanced student information and assessment systems
Develop or expand Pre-K or full day kindergarten	Restructure the traditional school schedule and class size
Establish comprehensive teacher evaluation systems	Provide resources to establish and support online learning

### Step Up with Certify - to Improve and Monitor Student Data

Certica Solutions' data certification software, called Certify™, enables schools and districts to:

- Improve the accuracy and completeness of data,
- Monitor data to provide a higher level of confidence in data analysis and decision making,
- Reduce the time and complexity associated with state reporting,
- Maximize state and federal funding.

Certify software is used by several Texas districts including Aldine ISD, Deer Park ISD, San Angelo ISD and Grand Prairie ISD.

### Is Certify Software Eligible for Texas Steps Up?

Yes. One of the key Steps Up activities outlined by TEA is for a district to **build enhanced student information and assessment systems**, as noted above. More information on this activity can be found at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/edex/docs/StepsUpDocData.pdf>. Above and beyond the examples provided in this online document, TEA has confirmed for Certica Solutions that the following action would be a welcomed and acceptable use of SFSF funds for this Steps Up activity:

**Create or purchase data quality tools that enable the systematic and ongoing automated process of monitoring student data to ensure the data is accurate and complete, in support of accurate analysis and decision making when analyzing the student data with data mining, data visualization or business intelligence tools.**

For more information on how a purchase of Certify software can qualify for the Texas Steps Up initiative, please contact your Certica Solutions account executive, or call Michelle DeAngelis at 877.255.4515 x262.