



The **Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI)** is a Dallas Independent School District initiative that replaced the previous tenure-based compensation system with an integrated system that defines, supports, and rewards teacher excellence. Teachers are evaluated each year based on a holistic view of their instructional performance (e.g., classroom observations, student achievement, and student experience surveys). In addition to a higher earning potential, there is evidence that performance-based pay systems can improve student outcomes and increase the retention rate of highly effective teachers.

Key Findings

Implementation

- First-year teachers received the lowest average summative appraisal score and the lowest average evaluation score. Scores trended upward with service years and plateaued between eight and 10 creditable years of service.
- Elementary core teachers had the highest percentage of positive student survey responses (85%), while middle school teachers had the lowest.
- Teachers with 14-25 years of service had the highest DTR rates (50%), while teachers with two years of service had the lowest (4%). Overall, 28 percent of teachers achieved DTR status in 2023-24.
- Proficient I was the most common effectiveness level (35%), followed by Progressing II (19%) and Progressing I (16%).
- Career change, employment in another district, and relocation (49%) and personal/family reasons (29%) were the most common reasons for teachers leaving the district in 2023-24.
- Teachers with higher effectiveness levels were retained at significantly higher rates than those at lower levels. For example, 40 percent of Unsatisfactory teachers left the district compared to two percent of Exemplary teachers.
- Teachers in Region V had higher TEI measures than other regions including summative appraisal scores (83.7) and DTR rates (44.6%), while Region IV had the lowest scores (78.4) and DTR rates (22.3%).

Stakeholder Feedback

- Most teachers (73%) and nearly all administrators (98%) reported intermediate to advanced knowledge of TEI in 2023-24.
- Administrators (93%) expressed higher satisfaction with TEI compared to teachers (44%) in 2023-24. Teachers with higher effectiveness levels reported greater satisfaction. Teachers with higher effectiveness levels perceived fairness more positively (59%) than those at lower levels (37%-47%).
- Administrators and teachers most frequently reported that challenges facing lower performing schools compared to higher performing schools was the reason for perceived TEI unfairness.
- Administrators and teachers with higher effectiveness levels were more likely to rate spot observations, extended observations, and summative performance evaluations as helpful compared to the teachers at lower effectiveness levels.
- Fifty five percent of teachers and 77 percent of administrators found feedback from the Student Experience Survey helpful. The percentage of administrators who found the feedback helpful or very helpful has consistently exceeded the overall teacher rate over the past three years.
- Both teachers and administrators generally reported improved ratings of professional development opportunities in 2023-24, following a decline in 2022-23.
- Administrators consistently reported higher rates of alignment between campus professional development and TEI related measures, including student achievement data and TEI spot observation data, than teachers.
- Teachers with lower effectiveness levels were reportedly more inclined to choose professional development sessions related to student achievement data and TEI spot observation data, while those with higher effectiveness levels were more likely to select sessions focused on the distinguished teacher review.
- Administrators (70%) were more likely than teachers (41%) to support salary differentiation based on effectiveness levels. Proficient II or higher teachers were more likely to agree (53%).
- Administrators and Proficient II or higher teachers agreed that the TEI compensation system positively impacted teacher recruitment and retention, with agreement rates higher than those of lower-level teachers.



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Recommendations

- **Expand differentiated professional development opportunities.**

Develop and expand professional development tailored to teachers' varying effectiveness levels, focusing on foundational topics for lower-effectiveness teachers and advanced strategies for higher-effectiveness teachers. Teachers with lower effectiveness levels were more likely to request professional development on foundational topics, such as classroom management and student engagement strategies. Higher-effectiveness teachers prioritized training in areas like distinguished teacher review and digital integration, with 44 percent selecting these topics compared to 26 percent of lower-effectiveness teachers.

- **Improve alignment of professional development with Distinguished Teacher Review (DTR) criteria.**

Focus on aligning professional development opportunities with the DTR process to support teachers striving for higher effectiveness levels. Alignment between professional development and DTR measures was reported as the lowest by teachers (45%) and administrators (56%). DTR achievement remains a critical performance milestone, with 28 percent of teachers across the district achieving this recognition.

- **Address perceived fairness of TEI components.**

Increase transparency and provide targeted support to address fairness concerns, particularly among teachers at lower-performing schools or with lower effectiveness levels. Less than half of teachers (47%) viewed the TEI system as at least somewhat fair, compared to 87 percent of administrators. Teachers at high-priority campuses were less likely to rate the TEI system as fair, often citing challenges at lower-performing schools as a significant factor. Addressing fairness concerns could improve teacher satisfaction and engagement across all levels of effectiveness.