

Evaluation of Public School Choice Transformation and Innovation Schools

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At-a-Glance

The purpose of Public School Choice (PSC), a facet of the district's Destination 2020 plan, is to provide "best-fit schools" for all students. In 2015-16, Dallas Independent School District (ISD) operated 12 Transformation and Innovation Choice Schools: three Transformation Schools, four Innovation Schools, and five conditional Innovation Schools. Another Transformation School was in the planning process. Transformation Schools were new start-up schools without traditional attendance zones whereas Innovation Schools were existing schools and limited to the students within the school's attendance zone.

The total funding amount available for PSC was \$4,351,332 including \$2,965,000 from district funds, \$818,472 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, \$467,860 from Title II funds, and \$100,000 from the New School Venture Fund. A component of the PSC initiative included budget autonomy, which allowed school administrators to submit individual workscopes to be approved by the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI). This enabled campus administrators to choose how they allocated funds and allowed them to roll over funds from one year to the next, for up to three years.

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the 1) application processes of Choice School applicant teams, teachers, and students; 2) goals and characteristics of the schools involved in 2015-16; 3) Public School Choice Survey results; 4) district climate survey results for Transformation and Innovation Schools; and 5) district student experience survey results for students attending Transformation and Innovation Schools. This evaluation is limited to context, process, and implementation data; future reports will include outcome data as appropriate.

Methodology

Contextual information was gathered from internal documents, the Dallas ISD PSC website, interviews with campus and district administrators, board briefings,

and informal classroom observations. Student data were extracted from the October 2015 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file for analyses. The evaluator developed a PSC survey to measure teacher and administrator perceptions. District Climate Survey and Student Experience Survey results were also analyzed.

Frequency and crosstabs analyses were tabulated overall and by Transformation and Innovation categorization. The collected qualitative data were synthesized for this report.

Implementation of Transformation and Innovation Schools

A total of 5,531 students attended a Choice School in 2015-16. Most (n=4,830) attended one of the nine Innovation Schools and the remaining 701 students attended one of the three Transformation Schools. The majority of students were Hispanic (74%) and economically disadvantaged (83%); half were English Language Learners (ELL).

Choice Schools are one way that Dallas ISD offers students opportunities to engage in schoolwide "anchor models" designed to address their interests and learning styles without having to meet academic admission requirements. Dallas ISD staff used available resources (i.e., websites and curriculum developers) to develop the anchor models.

The Transformation Schools in 2015-16 were Mata Elementary, D.A. Hulcy STEAM Middle, and IDEA at Fannin High. Solar Preparatory School for Girls, a Transformation School scheduled to open in the fall of 2016, was in its planning stage during the 2015-16 school year. Dallas ISD operated four official Innovation Schools (Rogers Elementary, Marsh Preparatory, Cabell Elementary, and Bryan Adams High) and five conditional Innovation Schools (Lipscomb Elementary, Lee Elementary, Kramer Elementary, Preston Hollow Elementary, and Franklin Middle) during the 2015-16

school year. See Table 1 for characteristics of Dallas ISD Choice Schools.

Table 1: 2015-16 Dallas ISD Choice Schools

Choice School and Anchor Model	Grades Served	Students (n)
Transformation Schools		
Mata ES (Montessori)*	PK to 3	405
Hulcy STEAM MS (STEAM)*	6	185
IDEA HS (Personalized Learning)*	9	111
Innovation Schools		
Rogers ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	502
Cabell ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	568
Lipscomb ES (IB)**	PK to 5	521
Lee ES (IB)**	PK to 5	358
Kramer ES (IB)**	PK to 5	497
Preston Hollow ES (IB)**	PK to 5	453
Marsh PA (Personalized Learning)*	6	315
Franklin MS (IB)**	6 to 8	995
Adams HS (Leadership)*	9	621

Note. STEAM=Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. ES=Elementary School. PA=Preparatory Academy. MS=Middle School. HS=High School. IB=International Baccalaureate. *An additional grade will be added each year until the model is implemented schoolwide. **These schools were funded by OTI as conditional Innovation Schools but will not be official Innovation Schools until they earn IB authorization. Source. PEIMS district database (10/13/15).

In the spring of 2014, OTI was launched to oversee the PSC initiative. In 2015-16, OTI supported existing Choice Schools, formed an advisory committee, assisted school application teams, conducted an awareness campaign, oversaw the spring student lottery process, and sought outside funding. OTI also established a Cross-Functional Support Team (C-FST) for every Choice School to support model implementation. The teams participated in six week touchpoints to discuss yearly progress and goals and to examine the model implementation and budget plan required for each school. Planning and Special Projects staff members worked with OTI to support personalized learning schools.

Application Processes for Choice School Applicant Teams, Teachers, and Students

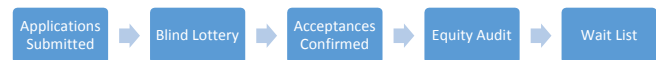
The makeup of Choice School applicant teams varied for Transformation and Innovation Schools. A Transformation School applicant team could be assembled from any combination of in-district and out-of-district educators. An Innovation School applicant team had to be established by an existing Dallas ISD leadership team. OTI staff members assisted teams throughout the rigorous three-step Choice School application process. This included a written review by the School Choice Committee (SCC), an interview with the SCC, and a review by the Superintendent's panel.

Of the 23 Transformation and Innovation proposals submitted in spring 2015, one Transformation School and one Innovation School were selected to launch in 2015-16. Of the eight proposals submitted in spring 2016, one Transformation School and one Innovation School were selected to launch in 2016-17.

OTI staff established a selection model for Choice School teacher applicants that included a data exercise to assess the candidate's ability to plan action steps to accelerate student learning based on the data. In addition to OTI's selection model, candidates applying for a position at a personalized learning school completed supplemental exercises specific to the model. These components were developed by Planning and Special Projects staff members and Human Capital Management (HCM).

Since Innovation Schools are neighborhood schools, students do not need to apply to attend like they do for Transformation Schools. Figure 1 displays the student application process for Transformation Schools.

Figure 1: Student Application Process for Transformation Schools



Student applications for Transformation Schools were available in English and Spanish; they could be submitted to OTI by mail, email, or text. OTI staff members set a priority radius for each school to ensure that seats would be available to students in the neighborhood and across the district. Then they offered seats to students based on a blind lottery.

Additionally, per District Policy FDB (Regulation), at least 12 percent of all students attending a Transformation School in 2016-17 must reside within Socioeconomic Block 3 and 12 percent must reside within Socioeconomic Block 4. Once acceptances were confirmed in spring 2015, OTI conducted an equity audit on all Transformation Schools for all confirmed seats for the 2016-17 school year. If the socioeconomic thresholds were not met, OTI pulled students from specific Socioeconomic Blocks and added seats. The remaining applications were added to a wait list.

Overall student acceptance rates for Transformation Schools were 43 percent for 2015-16 and 38 percent for 2016-17. Thus, there were markedly more applications submitted than seats available. OTI staff members believed their awareness and marketing campaign was instrumental in recruiting students.

Choice School Survey Results

Choice School staff members were asked to complete a PSC survey in January 2016. Of the respondents (n=353), 84 percent described the professional development they received as helpful. The majority (80%) felt supported by fellow teachers and campus administrators as they implemented the school's Choice model. Most (73% to 75%) indicated that students benefited academically, socially, and emotionally from their model. The main challenges were implementation of the Choice model (n=85), alignment of the Choice model to district and state requirements (n=76), and inadequate resources (n=17).

District Climate Survey Results

The results were positive for the three Transformation Schools both semesters, but varied widely when reviewed by school. All three Transformation Schools and the district had over 75 percent positive ratings on the Beliefs and Priorities and College-Going Culture scales both semesters, whereas the percentages varied more for the Culture of Feedback and Support (55% to 100%) and Positive Culture and Environment scales (65% to 90%). Innovation School results were also positive for the most part and varied by campus.

District Student Experience Survey Results

The Student Experience Survey was administered to students in grades three to 12 during the week of April 11 to 15, 2016. Students were asked to complete surveys for two of their teachers. Like the district's Student Experience Survey results, elementary Choice School student responses were more positive than secondary Choice School student responses on all five scales. Over 70 percent of elementary and secondary Choice student responses were positive for Classroom Environment, Expectations and Rigor, and Pedagogical Rigor. Results varied for elementary (53% to 93%) and secondary (58% to 73%) Choice students for Supportive Relationships. Likewise, results were mixed

for Student Engagement with noticeably lower percentages of positive responses for secondary (44% to 62%) than elementary (80% to 96%) Choice students. Student survey results varied widely when reviewed by school.

Recommendations

Continue offering professional development opportunities targeted at Choice model implementation. Per PSC survey results, Choice teachers expressed a need for additional support related to their Choice model, both in how to implement the model overall and with special populations. Additionally, respondents requested guidance as they work to maintain fidelity to the Choice model while also meeting district and state requirements.

Ensure that teachers have the necessary materials to successfully implement the Choice model. PSC survey results showed that 35 percent of respondents did not feel they had adequate resources to implement the Choice model. Inadequate access to materials could negatively affect the quality of implementation of the Choice model. As a result, it will be important that Choice funds are used to provide essential classroom resources.

References

Dallas ISD 2015-16 District Action Plan. Website: www.dallasisd.org/Page/14394.

Dallas ISD District Policy FDB (Regulation). Website: <http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/361?filter=FDB>.

Dallas ISD Public School Choice. Website: www.dallasisd.org/choice.

The full 2015-16 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457.