Evaluation of the 2015-16 Teacher Excellence Initiative: Final Report

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At-a-Glance

The Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) began its first year of implementation within the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) during the 2014-15 school year and continued during the 2015-16 school year. The primary objective of TEI is to improve student learning by improving teacher effectiveness. The initiative is an integrated system that defines, supports, and rewards excellence. Defining excellence involves conducting an annual evaluation of teachers using the following indicators: teacher performance (i.e., rubric-based observations of practice), student achievement (i.e. student assessment results), and student experience (i.e., student survey results). Supporting excellence involves developing teachers through self-facilitated learning opportunities, one on one coaching supports, whole-group training opportunities, district content workshops, differentiated professional development academies, and a new teacher mentor program. Rewarding excellence involves providing teachers with the opportunity to significantly increase their salaries based on performance rather than tenure with the district. TEI is a continuous improvement model that is designed to be fair, accurate, and rigorous.

The following are the major findings of the TEI evaluation:

- On average, spot observation scores increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16, indicating TEI evaluator feedback could be leading to improved performance over time.
- The correlation between spot observations scores and summative performance evaluation scores increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16, indicating that TEI evaluators' summative scores became more strongly aligned with what they observed in the classroom over time.
- Within student achievement, relationships among teacher-level student achievement, school *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR)*, and Student Learning Objective (SLO) measures remained relatively weak and stable from 2014-15 to 2015-16.
- The percentage of items with a positive response on the student survey varied by school level. Elementary core teachers received a significantly higher percentage of positive responses than elementary non-core, middle school, and high school teachers. It is important to note that the TEI system takes into account school level differences by applying cut points and the target distribution which builds equity into the system.
- The strength of the relationship among TEI components (teacher performance, student achievement, and student experience) remained mixed but still increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16.
- The average evaluation score for Category A, B, C, and D teachers increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16, which indicated that teachers were performing better over time.
- At least some teachers in each effectiveness level (except those in the unsatisfactory level) who stayed in a TEI position received a pay increase for 2014-15 and 2015-16. While teachers' salaries increased more in 2014-15 than 2015-16, this was partially due to the number of teachers in 2014-15 whose salary was automatically increased to meet the minimum salary requirements for each effectiveness level.
- The percentage of teachers who left the Dallas ISD decreased from 2014-15 to 2015-16, and the largest percentage of teachers who left the district was in the Unsatisfactory or Progressing I classifications for both 2014-15 and 2015-16. This indicated that a greater percentage of low performing teachers left the district compared to high performing teachers over time.
- To date, the district has not outlined expectations regarding the strength of correlations, or relationships, between or among components and measures of TEI. Further professional development and calibration of the TEI tools may lead to stronger relationships over time. Because TEI is a continuous improvement model, future evaluations should continue to monitor the TEI elements and how they relate to one another in order to determine what relationships should exist and to what degree.

Teacher Performance

The average spot observation score increased from 1.75 in 2014-15 to 1.88 in 2015-16. For both 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years, the average spot observation score significantly increased from the first to last observation, and the size of this difference also increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16.

Teacher performance scores were based on a teacher's summative performance evaluation given by the primary TEI evaluator. When assigning summative performance evaluation scores, the evaluators considered all evidence (i.e., spot, extended, and

informal observations). The mean and median were almost identical with a mean of 71.3 and a median, or 50th percentile, of 72.0. Because a score of 67 can be achieved by receiving a two (Proficient) on all items, this indicated that teachers were performing slightly better than proficient on average across the summative performance evaluation rubric. Compared to 2014-15, more summative performance evaluation scores in 2015-16 were on the higher end of the distribution. However, it is not possible to know whether scores increased because teacher performance improved, because scores were being inflated by the TEI evaluators, or because scores were improving because lower performing teachers left the district. In addition, middle school teachers received significantly lower summative scores than elementary or high school teachers. School leadership should explore the potential causes of this difference. In addition, teachers with zero creditable years of service (i.e., first year teachers) had the lowest average summative performance evaluation scores (59.3), but the average scores gradually increased as years of service increased and plateaued between three and five creditable years of service.

Evaluation and Assessment (E&A) department evaluators compared summative scores with other formal observation scores to see if a relationship existed. The scores for the indicators in both the spot observations and summative evaluation were highly correlated, which indicated that TEI evaluators' summative scores were aligned with what they observed in the classroom. Table 1 contains the correlations between teachers' average spot observation score for each indicator and their indicator score on the summative evaluation. The correlation between spot observation scores and summative performance evaluation scores increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16, indicating that TEI evaluators' summative scores became more strongly aligned with what they observed in the classroom over time.

Table 1: Correlations between Average Spot Observation Scores and Summative Performance Evaluation Scores

Indicator	*r**
2.1 Establishes clear, aligned standards-based lesson objective(s)	0.71
2.2 Measures student mastery through a demonstration of learning (DOL)	0.68
2.3 Clearly presents instructional content	0.78
2.5 Engages students at all learning levels in rigorous work	0.77
3.1 Maximizes instructional time	0.76
Overall Observation Score	0.80

* .10 = small effect size, .30 = medium effect size, .50 = large effect size

Student Achievement

Scores for total student achievement, teacher-level student achievement, and school *STAAR* were similar for both 2014-15 and 2015-16. First, no statistically significance difference was found between Categories A and B teachers on total student achievement scores, and while the difference between the average scores for Categories C and D was statistically significant, it was not practically significant. Second, teachers with zero creditable years of service had the lowest average score for total student achievement across all teacher categories. Third, each school received an overall school *STAAR* score that contributed to teachers' total student achievement scores. The average school *STAAR* base points that teachers received for both 2014-15 and 2015-16 was 2.63 out of 6.00 points. Fourth, the percentage of teachers who received the maximum number of SLO points increased from 2014-15 (53.1%) to 2015-16 (66.4%). Lastly, the strength of the relationship between teacher-level student achievement and school *STAAR* and between teacher level student achievement and SLO remained consistent from 2014-15 (r = .195-.420; ρ = .192 .211) to 2015-16 (r = .268-.423; ρ = .202-.225).

Student Experience

The percentage of items with a positive response on the student survey was found to vary by school level (elementary core, elementary non-core, middle, and high school). The percentage of items with a positive response on the student survey for elementary core teachers (M = 84.82; SD = 9.79) was significantly higher than elementary non-core (M = 77.02; SD = 9.93; Cohen's d = 0.79), middle school (M = 66.77; SD = 14.30; Cohen's d = 1.49), and high school teachers (M = 70.44; SD = 15.15; Cohen's d = 1.12). Cohen's d effect sizes indicated that the practical differences between these groups were relatively large. Elementary non-core teachers had a significantly higher average percentage than middle school (Cohen's d = 0.76) and high school teachers (Cohen's d = 0.56), which was a medium effect size. Middle school teachers had a significantly lower percentage than high school (Cohen's d = 0.25), but the practical difference between these groups was relatively small. It is important to note that the TEI system takes into account school level differences by applying cut points and the target distribution which builds equity into the system.

Teachers with zero creditable years of service had the lowest average percentage of items with a positive response (71.0%). The average percentage increased until between three and five creditable years of service and gradually decreased as years of service increased.

Correlations Among TEI Components

Overall, the strength of the relationships among TEI components increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16. During the 2015-16 school year, teacher performance was moderately correlated with total student achievement scores for Categories A and B teachers

(r = .436), but a weak correlation was found for Categories C and D teachers (r = .261). In addition, the percentage of positive responses on the student survey was weakly correlated with both summative performance evaluation scores (r = .332) and total student achievement scores (r = .174-.254). Further professional development for teachers and principals may increase the strength of correlations in the future. It is also possible that adjustments to the measures and improvements in rater calibration would further increase the strength of the correlations.

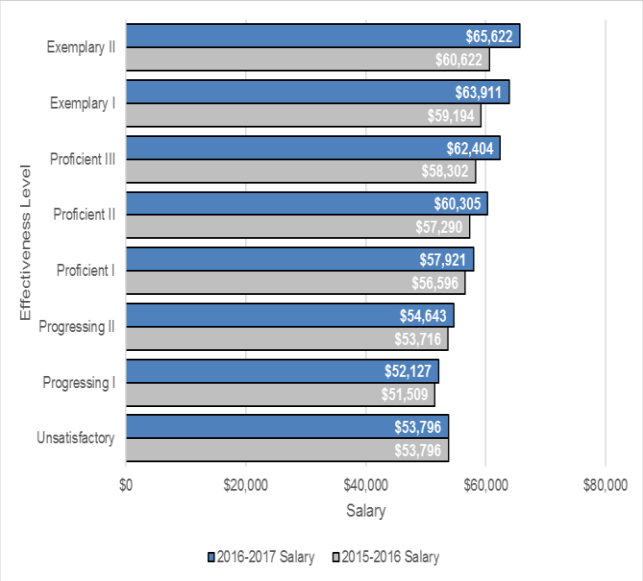
Evaluation Scores and Evaluation Ratings

Teachers' average evaluation scores increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16, which indicated that teachers were performing better over time. For Category A, B, C, and D teachers, all of their average evaluation scores increased from 2014-15 (63.8-67.5) to 2015-16 (66.0-72.5).

Compensation

Nearly 58 percent (n = 4,557) of teachers received a salary increase during the 2015-16 school year. Figure 1 compares teachers' average 2015-16 salary to their average 2016-17 salary by effectiveness level.

Figure 1: Average 2015-16 Salary versus Average 2016-17 Salary by Effectiveness Level



In 2016-17, the median salary change among full-time teachers in TEI-coded teaching positions was $1,000. On average, teachers in each effectiveness level received a pay increase with the exception of teachers in the unsatisfactory level. Teachers in higher effectiveness levels received larger salary increases than those in lower levels. If a teacher's effectiveness level warranted a salary increase greater than $5,000, the increase was capped at $5,000. Nine percent ($n$ = 708) of teachers fell into this category. However, 33 percent (n = 2,618) of teachers had an effectiveness level which warranted less pay than they made during the 2015-16 school year. Teachers' salaries generally increased more in 2014-15 than in 2015-16. While the percentage of teachers who received a pay increase fell from 72 percent in 2014-15 to 58 percent in 2015-16, this was partially due to the number of teachers in 2014-15 whose salary was automatically increased to meet the minimum salary requirements for each effectiveness level.

Distinguished Teacher Review Process

During the 2015-16 school year, 1,759 teachers were eligible for Distinguished Teacher Review (DTR). Of those, 1,592 (90.5%) successfully met all of the requirements and achieved a distinguished effectiveness level. While the average number of DTR points awarded by the district decreased from 12.4 in 2014-15 to 11.34 in 2015-16, the percentage of teachers who achieved DTR status increased from 11.6 percent in 2014-15 to 18.9 percent in 2015-16. This change was likely due to more teachers in 2015-16 receiving points that were concentrated around the average number of DTR points awarded.

Retention Rates

Information about why teachers left the district was gathered from S54 forms that teachers completed when they separated from the district. The data were self-reported. Overall, the percentage of teachers who left the Dallas ISD decreased from approximately 16 percent in 2014-15 to approximately 15 percent in 2015-16. During the 2015-16 school year, teachers left the district for a variety of reasons including retiring, being laid off/discharged, or quitting. The majority of non-retained teachers quit (57.7%) while almost 28 percent retired. Layoffs and discharges accounted for over 11 percent of the non-retained teachers. Lastly, the retention rates for each effectiveness level increased from 2014-15 (44%-91%) to 2015-16 (59%-100%). However, the smallest retention rates were teachers in the Unsatisfactory or Progressing I classification for both 2014 15 (44%-77%) and 2015-16 (58%-79%). This indicated that a smaller percentage of low performing teachers than high performing teachers remained in the district for both school years.

High School Feeder Pattern

When comparing scores for TEI measures across high school feeder patterns, there was much variation. In 2015-16, ACE campuses were among the top performing feeder patterns across the district. These results indicated that incentivizing higher performing teachers to relocate to ACE campuses for the 2015-16 school year resulted in improved student outcomes, including both student achievement and student experience (i.e., campus culture) outcomes. The review

of summative performance evaluation scores, total student achievement, school *STAAR*, student experience, and distinguished teacher status data showed that the ACE initiative was successful in achieving the expected results.

When comparing results over time, there were some small increases in scores across TEI measures. The district average for summative performance evaluation increased from 66.4 in 2014-15 to 71.3 in 2015-16, and the average score for each feeder pattern increased from 2014-15 (57.9-76.6) to 2015-16 (65.7-81.3). Total student achievement points were relatively consistent from 2014-15 to 2015-16 across feeder patterns. For Category A and B teachers, the average total student achievement score slightly decreased from 20.6 in 2014-15 to 20.4 in 2015-16. For Category C and D teachers, the average total student achievement score was 13.0 for both 2014-15 and 2015-16. The district average for school *STAAR* scores increased from 2.7 in 2014-15 to 3.4 in 2015-16, and the scores for all feeder patterns except one increased from 2014-15 (1.7-3.3) to 2015-16 (2.1-4.7). While student experience scores increased for some feeder patters (e.g., Wilson and Lincoln), other feeder patterns reported lower student experience scores over time (e.g., Seagoville and Wilmer-Hutchins). As a result, the district average for student experience scores was 8.1 for both 2014-15 and 2015-16. The percentage of DTR teachers for all feeder patterns except two increased from 2014-15 (3.8%-21.5%) to 2015-16 (7.0%-32.6%).

Teacher Demographic Groups

TEI evaluation scores varied by teacher demographic groups, but many teachers belonged to more than one of these groups. This overlap between groups is important to be aware of because it explains in many instances why TEI scores among the teacher demographic groups may be similar or different from one another. For the 2015-16 school year, the highest performing groups were teachers at majority white schools, teachers at magnet schools, and teachers who stayed in the district but moved out of TEI-coded positions. Teachers who left the district received lower average scores than their counterparts who stayed in the district. The group that received the lowest scores was first-year teachers with the exception of Teach for America (TFA) teachers. The average evaluation scores were lower for teachers in their first or second year of teaching, and improvement appeared to level out by the third and fourth year in the classroom. Teachers at Imagine 2020 (I2020), Improvement Required (IR), or Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) schools performed better on average than first-year teachers, but I2020 and IR schools performed below the district average in most areas. The average scores for the majority Hispanic schools was nearly identical to the district scores. This finding is not surprising considering the fact that 80.7 percent of teachers teach at majority Hispanic schools. Teachers at majority African American schools scored below the district in all areas. Their scores were comparable to teachers at IR schools.

Overall, summative performance evaluation scores increased across all teacher demographic groups from 2014-15 to 2015-16. The largest increases were found for teachers at ACE schools, teachers with post baccalaureate degrees, teachers at majority white schools, and teachers who participated in Teach for America, which increased by 12.76, 9.43, 6.92, and 5.36 points from 2014-15 to 2015-16, respectively. In addition, total student achievement scores generally increased across teacher demographic groups from 2014-15 to 2015-16. For Category A and B teachers, their total student achievement scores for most teacher demographic groups changed by 1.5 points or less from 2014-15 to 2015-16. The largest increase was reported for ACE schools, which increased by 7.3 points. For Category C and D teachers, their total student achievement scores increased across all teacher demographic groups from 2014=15 (7.8-18.1) to 2015-16 (15.5-20.4). The largest increase was also reported for ACE schools, which increased by 12.6 points. Lastly, while the average student experience score was 8.1 for both 2014-15 and 2015-16, scores slightly fluctuated across teacher demographic groups.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on the results of the 2015-16 TEI program evaluation:

1. School leadership and TEI staff members should explore and address the following quantitative findings, including determining whether additional professional development or rubric calibration is needed: lower summative evaluation ratings among middle school teachers; poor distribution of scores on the SLO measure; low correlations among achievement component measures (student achievement, school *STAAR*, and SLO points); and the varying strength of the correlations among the three TEI components (summative performance evaluation, student achievement, and student experience).

2. Future evaluations should continue to monitor the correlation strength among the three TEI components and consider the methods by which TEI component data are analyzed. Because some data are analyzed after the target distribution has been applied, it may be more appropriate to analyze raw scores. Evaluators should determine to what extent this is possible.

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