

Evaluation of the 2015-16 Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI): Survey Results Report

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At-a-Glance

The Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) began its first year of implementation of the evaluation and associated support systems during the 2014-15 school year. In the summer of 2014, administrators and other central office staff members within TEI began certifying evaluators on the TEI system. Beginning in 2015-16, teacher evaluation results from the 2014-15 school year were used to determine compensation levels. The TEI system continued during the 2015-16 school year. Teacher evaluation results from 2015-16 were used to determine compensation in 2016-17.

The initiative was established with one primary objective, to improve student learning by improving teacher effectiveness. The TEI system defines, supports, and rewards excellence. Defining Excellence involves conducting annual evaluations of teachers that contain a combination of teacher performance indicators, student achievement indicators, and 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 opportunities to significantly increase their salaries based on performance rather than tenure with the district. TEI is a continuous improvement model and is designed to account for the differing teaching environments of Dallas Independent School District (ISD) teachers. The model is designed to be fair, accurate, and rigorous.

Dallas ISD teachers and administrators who participated in the second year of TEI received a 40-item survey soliciting information about participants' experiences with TEI during the 2015-16 school year with some additional items about professional development during the 2016-17 school year. The survey covered the defining excellence, supporting excellence, and rewarding excellence components of TEI. The responses were intended to provide information regarding how the TEI system functioned during its second year and to identify any potential adjustments that could be made. The survey was sent to 8,551 teachers and 547 administrators. Of those, 4,575 teachers and 350 administrators completed the survey, resulting in a 53.5 percent and 64.0 percent response rate, respectively. Principals made up 37 percent of respondents to the administrator survey. The majority of respondents were assistant principals

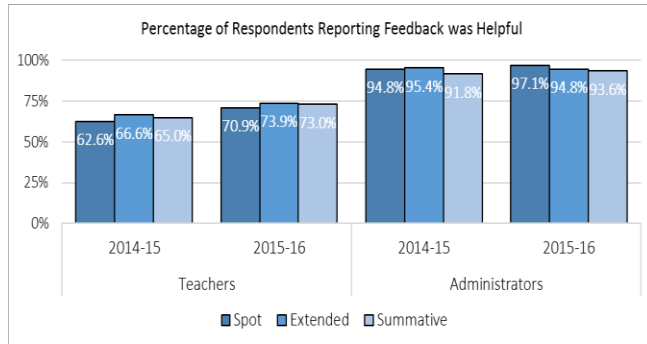
(62%). The percentage of elementary, middle, and high school teachers who responded across school level was representative of the total teacher population in the Dallas ISD who were in TEI-eligible positions (Douglas & Barton, February 2017). Furthermore, while the average creditable years of service for all teachers in TEI positions was 9.6 (Douglas & Barton, February 2017), the average creditable years of service for survey respondents was 12.7, which indicated that teachers with more experience responded to the survey at higher rates than less experienced teachers.

The teacher survey results in general showed low levels of satisfaction with the TEI system; however, there were some individual elements of the system that were rated positively as well as some areas identified where improvements could be made to increase satisfaction with the system in the future. While administrator results were mixed, administrators tended to have more positive perceptions of TEI than did teachers. There was positive growth over time, from 2014-15 to 2015-16, for both teachers and administrators. The components rated most favorably included TEI evaluator feedback, professional development, the Distinguished Teacher Review process, and resources to assist in understanding TEI. Areas with less favorable responses included feedback from the student experience survey, the compensation system, communication about TEI, and TEI in general. A gap in perceptions of and experiences related to TEI existed between teachers and administrators, with administrators holding more positive views of the system than teachers. The results of the survey indicated that there was a disconnect between teachers and administrators regarding their experiences, knowledge, and perceptions of the TEI system.

Observation and Feedback

A majority of respondents from both groups indicated that administrators were able to evaluate teachers effectively. In general, administrators were able to identify areas for improvement, set high standards for teachers, and knew classroom goals for students. Both teachers and administrators indicated that observation feedback was helpful, but administrators rated the helpfulness of their feedback more positively than did teachers (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Helpfulness of Observation Feedback in General



Note: 2015-16 Survey Respondent Counts - Teachers, N=4,575; Administrators, N=341. 2014-15 Survey Respondent Counts - Teachers, N=4,185; Administrators, N=287.

A larger percentage of teachers in 2015-16 than in 2014-15 indicated that the number of spot observations they received were “just right” (42.9% and 57.6%, respectively). This finding is aligned with a TEI policy change in 2015-16 reducing the number of required spot observations. Teachers and administrators indicated that spot observations were aligned with summative performance evaluations. Some improvement was needed with regard to teachers’ perceptions of the accuracy of the summative performance evaluation in measuring their effectiveness (50.1% of teachers in 2014-15 and 44.4% in 2015-16 indicating summative performance evaluations were “not accurate”).

Student Experience Survey

The percentage of teachers and administrators indicating that student experience survey feedback was helpful increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16; however, the percentage of administrators and teachers indicating student experience survey results accurately reflected teachers’ strengths and weaknesses remained relatively low. The majority of teachers continued to indicate that they were not using the Panorama Playbook (87.0% in 2014-15 and 73.5% in 2015-16).

Distinguished Teacher Review

The TEI office conducted a survey of Distinguished Teacher Review (DTR) teachers in May of 2016. The results of that survey indicated that many teachers who submitted a Distinguished Teacher Review application and received an observation were satisfied with the DTR process. More than 70 percent of administrators who completed the E&A TEI survey conducted observations as part of the DTR process. Of those, over half (57.5%) reported that the number of observations was “just right.” About half of administrators also reported that the process was fair (50.6%). Almost 60 percent of administrators reported that the DTR process was too cumbersome for teachers. The survey results

regarding the DTR process seem to support the change in TEI DTR policy for the 2016-17 school year. The requirement that external evaluators observe DTR-eligible teachers was removed from the DTR review process. Going forward, the DTR process will only include the DTR Application on which teachers demonstrate examples of their leadership, lifelong learning, and contributions to the profession. For teachers who underwent DTR in the 2015-16 school year and chose not to reapply during the 2016-17 school year, their 2015-16 DTR observation points will not roll over onto the Scorecard released September 2017.

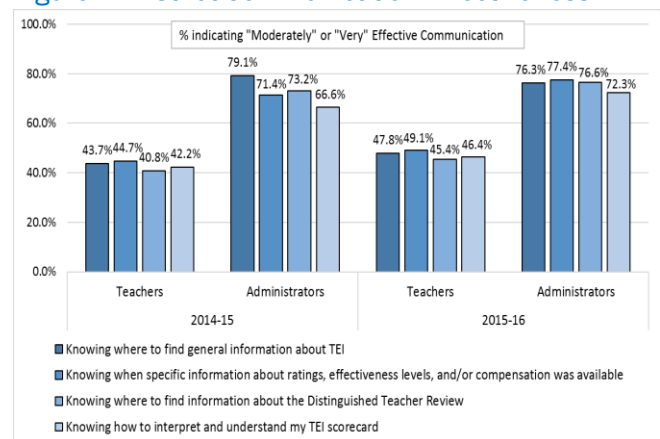
Compensation

When it came to ratings of the new compensation system, results were less favorable. Administrators’ perceptions of the new system were more positive than those of teachers. A majority of teachers disagreed with statements such as, “The new TEI system should be continued in its current form” and “The TEI system will entice more effective teachers to work at lower performing schools.” Administrators also disagreed with these items at a higher rate, though it was not a majority. Administrators were more likely to give neutral ratings about compensation than were teachers.

TEI Knowledge, Resources, and Communication

Administrators rated district communication about TEI more favorably than did teachers; however, percentage of favorable responses increased slightly from 2014-15 to 2015-16 (Figure 2).

Figure 2: District Communication Effectiveness



Note: 2015-16 Survey Respondent Counts - Teachers, N=4,575; Administrators, N=350. 2014-15 Survey Respondent Counts - Teachers, N=4,119; Administrators, N=287.

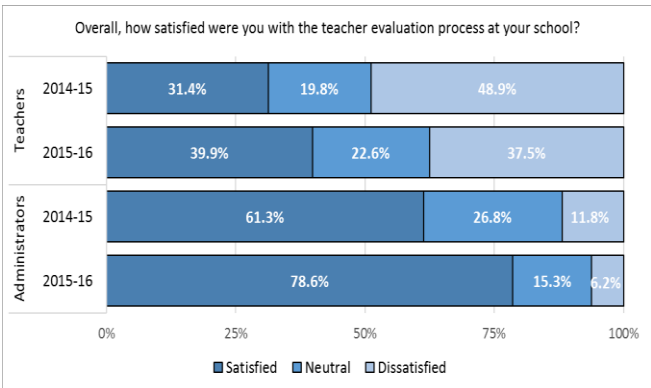
Teachers and administrators indicated that they were most knowledgeable about TEI in general, how observations were used to determine summative performance scores, and the observation rubric used to rate teacher performance. Administrators rated

themselves as more knowledgeable than did teachers. Ratings of TEI knowledge increased for both teachers and administrators from 2014-15 to 2015-16. Teachers were most likely to use on-campus professional development or one-on-one conversations with their administrator to learn about TEI. Administrators were more likely to use the resources provided on the TEI website and the TEI guidebook. Administrators were also much more likely to contact the TEI office for assistance; 70.2 percent of teachers in 2015-16 reported that they did not contact the TEI office, while only 7.4 percent of administrators indicated this.

Satisfaction with TEI

With regard to TEI in general, administrators and teachers were most likely to indicate that they had a basic understanding of the TEI system and least likely to indicate that the TEI system was fair or accurate. Level of satisfaction with TEI increased from 2014-15 to 2015-16 for both teachers (31.4% to 39.9%, respectively) and administrators (61.3% to 78.6%, respectively; Figure 3).

Figure 3: Level of Satisfaction with Teacher Evaluation Process



Note: "Satisfied" percentages include "Very Satisfied" and "Satisfied." "Dissatisfied" includes "Very Dissatisfied" and "Dissatisfied." 2015-16 Survey Respondent Counts - Teachers, N=4,575; Administrators, N=341. 2014-15 Survey Respondent Counts - Teachers, N=4,189; Administrators, N=287. Percentages may not equal to 100 percent due to rounding.

2016-17 Professional Development

Teachers reported that professional development sessions offered on their campuses were well planned and organized and included active learning opportunities. Teachers and administrators indicated that professional development on their campuses was aligned with campus climate survey results and student achievement data. Both groups were less likely to indicate professional development was aligned with student experience survey results.

Recommendations

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

1. Address discrepancies between teachers' reports of experiences and administrators' perceptions of teachers' experiences (e.g., helpfulness of feedback, district communication, TEI overall).
2. Examine the length of typical spot observations and determine whether the current requirement is sufficient to determine teacher effectiveness.
3. Survey results showed some improvement in teachers' perceptions of the alignment of spot observations and summative performance evaluations; however, more growth in this area would be beneficial. Creating a more transparent procedure for including spot observation ratings into the summative performance evaluation might ease teachers' anxiety about alignment of these two systems.
4. Provide additional opportunities for teachers to learn about the calculation of overall evaluation ratings, effectiveness levels, and compensation levels. Also provide more information about the DTR process and how teachers can move from one effectiveness level to another.
5. Because teachers seemed to be less likely to use TEI resources offered off campus, TEI staff should consider increasing the amount of TEI-related professional development and resources offered on campus. Though teachers seemed to prefer on-campus TEI training, they also rated items related to professional development across the district favorably. This should be remembered when determining the best method of delivering resources and training on the TEI system.
6. Administer the teacher and administrator perception surveys again at a later date. Apply methods that could potentially increase the response rate above 60 percent in order to gain a more representative picture of the attitudes and experiences of Dallas ISD teachers and administrators.

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.