

2016-17 Evaluation of Public School Choice

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At-a-Glance

The purpose of Public School Choice (PSC) was to provide “best-fit schools” for all students. In 2016-17, Dallas Independent School District (ISD) operated 14 Transformation and Innovation Choice Schools: four Transformation Schools, five Innovation Schools, and five conditional Innovation Schools. Transformation Schools were new schools without traditional attendance zones whereas Innovation Schools were existing schools and limited to the students within the school’s attendance zone.

The total amount available for 2016-17 was \$3,009,830. The funding amount included \$1,890,358 from district funds, \$818,472 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, \$175,000 from the New School Venture Fund (NSVF), and \$126,000 from Title II funds. A component of the PSC initiative included budget autonomy, which allowed school administrators to decide how they allocated funds and allowed them to roll over funds for up to three years.

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the 1) characteristics of Transformation and Innovation Schools; 2) executive director, campus administrator, and teacher perceptions of PSC; 3) characteristics and outcomes of Dallas ISD’s socioeconomic diversity pilot; and 4) outcomes of Choice School students.

Methodology

Contextual information was gathered from internal documents, interviews, and informal classroom observations. Student data were extracted from the October 2016 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file for analyses. The results of the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* exams were extracted from the Dallas ISD’s MyData Portal site. PSC Survey, District Climate Survey and Student Experience Survey results were also analyzed. Frequency and crosstabs analyses were tabulated. The collected qualitative data were synthesized.

Student and School Selection Processes

Students who lived in Innovation School attendance zones were automatically selected to attend; whereas, the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) utilized a lottery process to select from the pool of student applicants for Transformation Schools. After the lottery process, OTI conducted an equity audit to ensure a wide range of socioeconomic diversity in the schools. Waitlisted students could be granted enrollment in order to meet equity goals.

Student acceptance rates at Transformation Schools were 43 percent in the spring of 2015, 38 percent in the spring of 2016, and 36 percent in the spring of 2017. Across all three years, there were markedly more applications submitted than seats available. Of the 689 students accepted to a Transformation School in the spring of 2017, approximately 35 percent were students not enrolled in a Dallas ISD school at the time of application.

OTI established a rigorous three-step application process for teams wanting to initiate a Choice School. The process required each team to submit a proposal to be reviewed by the School Choice Committee (SCC) followed by two rounds of interviews. Twenty-three proposals were submitted in spring 2015, two of which were selected to launch in 2015-16. Eight proposals were submitted in spring 2016, two of which were selected to launch in 2016-17. Eleven proposals were submitted in spring 2017, two of which were selected to launch in 2017-18. One campus was selected to pilot a Choice program and may become a Choice School in the fall of 2018.

Implementation of Choice Schools

A total of 8,688 students attended a Choice School in 2016-17, which was an increase from 5,531 students in 2015-16. Most (n=7,407) attended an Innovation School and the remaining 1,281 students attended a Transformation School. Table 1 reports the characteristics of Dallas ISD Choice Schools.

Table 1: 2016-17 Dallas ISD Choice Schools

Choice School and Anchor Model	Grades Served	Students (N)
Transformation Schools		
Mata ES (Montessori)	PK to 5	497
Solar Preparatory School for Girls (STEAM)	K to 2	194
Hulcy STEAM MS (STEAM)	6 to 7	376
IDEA HS (Personalized Learning)	9 to 10	214
Innovation Schools		
Rogers ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	514
Cabell ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	558
Lipscomb ES (IB)*	PK to 5	509
R. Lee ES (IB)*	PK to 5	318
Kramer ES (IB)*	PK to 5	567
Preston Hollow ES (IB)*	PK to 5	476
Weiss ES (Leadership)	PK to 5	548
Marsh PA (Personalized Learning)	6 to 8	911
Franklin MS (IB)*	6 to 8	966
Adams HS (Leadership)	9 to 12	2,040

Note: STEAM=Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. ES=Elementary School. PA=Preparatory Academy. MS=Middle School. HS=High School. IB=International Baccalaureate. *These schools were funded by OTI as conditional Innovation Schools and will be official Innovation Schools when they earn IB authorization. **Source:** PEIMS district database (10/31/16).

2016-17 Choice Campus Survey Results

Of the Choice School Survey respondents (N=354), 84 percent described the professional development they received as helpful. Most indicated that students benefited academically, socially, and emotionally from their model. The main challenges were alignment of the Choice model to district and state requirements (n=64), and inadequate resources (N=35).

The 2016-17 Climate Survey was administered to all Dallas ISD campus professional and support staff in the fall and spring. All four Transformation Schools and the district had over 70 percent positive ratings on three out of four scales. Innovation School results were positive for the most part and varied by campus.

The Student Experience Survey was administered to students in grades three to 12. Like the district's Student Experience Survey results, elementary Choice School student responses were more positive than secondary Choice 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 Effectiveness. Results varied for Choice students for Supportive Relationships. Likewise, results were mixed for Student Engagement with noticeably lower percentages of positive responses for secondary than elementary Choice students. Student survey results varied widely when reviewed by school.

Choice Student Outcome Results

In general, student attendance and discipline were positive in 2015-16 and 2016-17 for Choice students. The attendance rates for all Transformation and Innovation Schools were higher than the district in 2015-16 (97.6% and 96.7% vs. 94.9%) and again in 2016-17 (96.9% and 96.6% vs. 94.8%). Fewer discipline referrals were reported for 2016-17 than in 2015-16 for both the district and Choice Schools. Most referrals were Level II and the least were Level IV. Reported offenses varied by campus. STAAR results varied by campus and grade level.

Recommendations

Continue offering professional development opportunities targeted at Choice model implementation. Per PSC survey results, Choice teachers requested guidance as they worked 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 121 respondents experienced challenges associated with teaching responsibilities. This included a lack of resources and a shortage of time to meet the demands of their positions.

Maintain fidelity to the process of Choice School selection and implementation. PSC survey results revealed concern over pressure to scale the Choice models too quickly in order to boost enrollment. Additionally, survey respondents voiced a desire to continue marketing to Dallas ISD families and to support students travelling to attend a Transformation School in order to increase and sustain enrollment in Dallas ISD schools.

The full 2016-17 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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