

2016-17 Evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE)

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At-a-Glance

Established in 2015-16, the Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) initiative offered competitive stipends to incentivize top teachers and leadership to relocate to seven of the district's Improvement Required (IR) campuses (Annie Webb Blanton, Umphrey Lee, Roger Q. Mills, Elisha M. Pease, Billy Earl Dade, Thomas A. Edison, Sarah Zumwalt). The ACE program was supported by \$4,575,462 of the Dallas ISD general operating funds. Most of the budget was allocated to annual stipends for teachers and leadership. The ACE program aimed to accelerate learning and improve student achievement on these seven campuses through five components (ACE 5). These components and their related objectives include the following:

Effective Principals and Teachers

- Annual teacher retention rate of 90 percent, and maintenance of a minimum of 50 percent of teachers with a Proficient I or higher rating
- High percentages (60% in fall; 75% in spring) of proficient teachers as measured by average Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) spot observation scores on standard 2.3 (clear instruction) and standard 2.4 (instructional rigor)
- Fourth or fifth quintile scores on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the campus Climate Survey

Instructional Excellence

- Growth toward district averages in kindergarten to grade two literacy as measured by *Istation Indicators of Progress (ISIP)*; rates of Tier 1 students at or above district rates)
- Growth toward district averages on test scores (within ten percentage points of district averages in fall for *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)* exams and in spring for *ACPs* and *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* exams

Extended Learning

- Fewer than ten percent (elementary) or 15 percent (middle) of students with failing course grades

Social-Emotional Support

- Number of disciplinary offenses at or below district campus average

Parent and Community Partnership

- Attendance rates of at least 96 percent

- Rate of favorable parent ratings at or above district rates as measured by the Principal Excellence Initiative (PEI) Parent/Guardian Survey

This evaluation covered progress toward outcomes related to these components in 2016-17, the second year of the program.

What were the characteristics of ACE students, teachers, and principals?

The 3,948 ACE students were about half male (52.1%), African American (55.1%), and Hispanic (42.5%). Most were economically disadvantaged (93.0%), 31.7 percent were English language learners, and 9.5% were enrolled in special education. The 264 ACE teachers were 71.2 percent female, 65.2 percent African American, 16.7 percent Hispanic, and 15.2 percent white. Forty percent held at least a master's degree, and ACE teachers taught in the Dallas ISD for an average of 7.1 years, with 45.8 percent teaching in the Dallas ISD for six or more years. The seven ACE principals were 71.4 percent female, 85.7 percent African American, and 14.3 percent Hispanic. All held master's degrees. ACE principals worked for the Dallas ISD for an average of 12.1 years, with 42.9 percent employed by the district for 16 to 20 years. Five ACE principals (72%) completed their second year as an ACE principal in 2016-17, and all but one (86%) served in the role of principal in the Dallas ISD for at least four to six years.

What were stakeholder perceptions of ACE?

Principals. As expressed in responses to an online survey administered by the evaluator, ACE principals generally expressed satisfaction with respect to year two of the ACE program. Successes mentioned included improved student movement and behavior, campus-parent communication, soft skills, and healthy intra-campus competition. Challenges principals faced included attendance and behavior issues; concern for minimizing disciplinary offenses; achievement gap reduction; and high student mobility rates. All principals expressed satisfaction with campus behavioral management training and implementation, and with efforts to increase parent and community involvement. Principals most frequently indicated that more coaching/mentoring (43%) and higher availability of instructional technology (29%) were factors that could improve success in ACE classrooms.

Teachers. As expressed in responses to an online survey administered by the evaluator, ACE teacher perceptions were generally positive. High percentages of teachers reported that highly qualified teachers, rigor of instruction, and high expectations were implemented effectively on their campuses. Perceptions varied on the efficacy of behavioral management implementation. Generally, teachers were satisfied with compensation and worked about 11 to 20 extra hours than they had at non-ACE campuses. The majority of teachers would recommend that their colleagues accept teaching positions on ACE campuses.

Students. The evaluator used district Student Experience Survey results to compare favorable response rates for the past three years. ACE student perceptions generally improved since 2015. In 2017, ACE elementary and middle schools overall exceeded the district favorable rate for district elementary schools and middle schools, respectively.

Parents. The evaluator used positive ACE parent response rates for the past three years from the Principal Excellence Initiative (PEI) Parent/Guardian Survey. ACE parent perceptions generally improved over the last two years. ACE elementary school campuses experienced higher 2017 positive parent response rates than ACE middle school campuses.

What were the outcomes of the effective principals and teachers component?

Retention Rates. ACE campus teacher retention rates ranged from 53.1 percent to 85.4 percent, with an overall ACE teacher retention rate of 68.8 percent. No ACE campuses attained the ACE objective of 90 percent teacher retention from fall 2015 to fall 2016.

Proficiency Ratings. All ACE elementary school campuses, one middle school campus, and ACE overall met the ACE objective of employing a minimum of 50 percent of teachers with a TEI rating of Proficient I or higher. In addition, all ACE campuses and ACE overall met or exceeded rates of teachers with at least Proficient I ratings at non-ACE IR campuses, and all but one ACE campus and ACE overall met or exceeded rates of Proficient I or higher ratings districtwide.

Spot Observations. Although small numbers of ACE campuses met or exceeded the fall objective of 60 percent of teachers with at least a proficient (2.0) spot observation average for section 2.3 (clear instruction) or 2.4 (instructional rigor) in fall 2016 and spring 2017, ACE overall did not meet the fall or spring objectives for proficient spot observations.

Climate Survey. In both fall 2016 and spring 2017, three of the seven ACE campuses achieved scores in the fourth or fifth quintiles on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the climate survey.

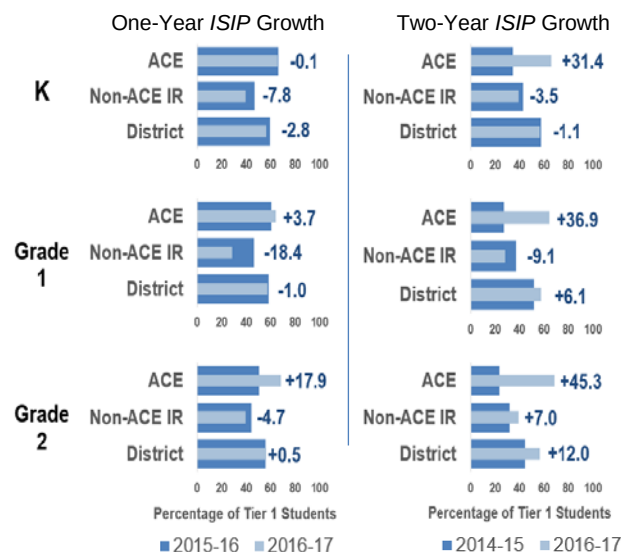
What were the outcomes of the instructional excellence component?

Istation Indicators of Progress (ISIP). The first outcome used to measure instructional excellence was the rate of kindergarten to grade two students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date who were reading at grade level (Tier 1) as measured by ISIP.

Overall combined English and Spanish rates of ACE students reading on grade level trended upward each six-week period from the start to the end of the year for all grade levels. End-of-year rates for all grades exceeded the district and non ACE IR campuses.

Figure 1 shows one- and two-year changes in ACE ISIP Tier 1 attainment rates for combined English and Spanish test takers. Positive trends from 2015-16 to 2016-17 were stronger than for non-ACE IR campuses and for the district, especially for grade two. These relatively small one-year ACE gains add to the extensive growth in Tier 1 attainment over the first year of the program. Tier 1 rate increases from 2014-15 to 2016-17 consistently exceeded improvements for non-ACE IR campuses and the district. These outcomes reflect sustained accelerated achievement in reading on grade level for kindergarten through grade two overall.

Figure 1: One- and Two-Year Growth in Combined English and Spanish ISIP Percentage Reading at Grade Level (Tier 1) for ACE, Non-ACE IR, and District



Source: District ISIP files dated October 30, 2016 (2015-16) and June 1, 2017 (2016-17) for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot dates of October 30, 2015 (2015-16) and October 28, 2016 (2016-17).

Note: Growth is expressed in **percentage point** differences. Non-ACE IR = Non-ACE Improvement Required campuses.

Assessment of Course Performance (ACP). The second outcome used to measure instructional excellence was passing rates for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date on ACP exams administered in fall 2016 and spring 2017.

Overall, passing rates for 62.2 percent of tests administered on ACE campuses in fall 2016 exceeded passing rates for the previous fall semester, and passing rates for 67.4 percent of tests exceeded fall 2016 passing rates at non-ACE IR campuses. When compared to the district overall, ACE students' fall 2016 ACP passing rates exceeded the district on 30.4 percent of tests, and achieved the fall 2016 objective of passing rates within 10 percent of district passing rates on 65.2 percent of ACP tests. These achievements were generally stronger for elementary campuses than for middle school campuses.

For spring 2017 ACP exams,¹ passing rates for 12.5 percent of tests administered on ACE campuses exceeded passing rates for the previous spring semester, and passing rates for 50.0 percent of tests exceeded spring 2017 passing rates on non-ACE IR campuses. When compared to the district overall, ACE students' spring 2017 ACP passing rates exceeded the district on 30.4 percent of tests, and achieved the spring 2017 objective of passing rates within 10 percent of district passing rates on 25.0 percent of ACP tests. ACE overall passing rates did not exceed those for the district for any spring 2017 ACP subject area or exam.

State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The third outcome used to measure instructional excellence was first and second administration STAAR passing rates² for exams administered in spring 2017 for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date.

As shown in Table 1 overall, 2017 passing rates exceeded 2016 rates for 88.9 percent of 2017 STAAR exams administered on ACE campuses. Passing rates for 50.0 percent of exams exceeded passing rates at non-ACE IR campuses; 66.7 percent were within 10 percentage points of rates for the district (meeting the 2017 ACE objective). Favorable comparisons were slightly higher for elementary school level exams than they were for middle school level exams.

One-year positive passing rate trends ranged from 0.2 to 17.0 percentage points, with four one-year passing rate increases from 2016 to 2017 exceeding 10

percentage points. Passing rates trended downward for two exams compared to 2016. Positive trends from 2015 to 2016 were stronger than from 2016 to 2017, with all exams but one showing a two-year upward trend. Two-year positive trends in passing rates ranged from 5.0 to 40.3 percentage points. Because of the variant nature of STAAR exam formats and cutoff standards over the past three years, readers should use caution when interpreting the reported year-to-year comparisons.

Table 1: 2016-17 ACE STAAR Test Passing Rate Comparisons

	Tests N	Passing Rates							
		Exceed Previous Year		Exceed Non-ACE IR		Within 10 Percentage Points of District		Exceed District	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
All Tests	18	16	88.9	12	66.7	9	50.0	2	11.1
All Mathematics	7	6	85.7	4	57.1	4	57.1	2	28.6
All Reading	6	5	83.3	3	50.0	2	33.3	0	0.0
All Writing	2	2	100.0	2	100.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
All Science	2	2	100.0	2	100.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
All Social Studies	1	1	100.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
All Elementary	8	8	100.0	7	87.5	7	87.5	1	12.5
All Middle	10	8	80.0	5	50.0	2	20.0	1	10.0

Source: District STAAR files dated July 11, 2016 (2016 grades three to eight), July 12, 2016 (2016 Algebra I EOC), June 15, 2017 (2017 grades three to eight), and June 22, 2017 (2017 Algebra I EOC).

Note: Passing rates reflect percentage of students meeting or exceeding the approaches grade level standard for first and second administrations of all versions of STAAR for grades three to eight and excluding STAAR Alternate-2 for Algebra I EOC. Scores included for students enrolled as of the PEIMS snapshot dates for each year. IR=Improvement Required campuses not included in the ACE program.

What were the outcomes of the extended learning component?

The evaluator used district course files to extract final course grades for grade two to grade eight students³ enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date, and then calculated rates of students with at least one failing course grade. Although ACE campuses overall did not meet the failure rate objectives for 2016-17 for any grade category, the program fared well in some comparisons to non-ACE IR and district failure rates. ACE students in grades two to five earned one or more failing final course grades at lower rates than both the district and non-ACE IR campuses. The percentage of ACE students in grades six to eight with one or more failing grades also was lower than the rate for non-ACE IR campuses and the district.

¹ Elementary school students did not take ACP exams in spring 2017, and middle school students took ACPs only when a comparable STAAR exam was not administered. Results presented reflect passing rate comparisons for the reduced number of exams, and results should be considered with extreme caution, especially when comparing to previous years.

² Passing rates were for students meeting or exceeding the approaches grade level standard (Level II Satisfactory Standard prior to 2017). All versions of STAAR were included except for Alternate-2 for Algebra I EOC.

³ Final course grades were not calculated for students in grades lower than grade two.

What were the outcomes of the social-emotional support component?

The evaluator used district disciplinary files to calculate the number of level I, II, and III disciplinary offenses by campus. For the second year, ACE campuses reduced total offenses. Three elementary schools and all three middle schools met the ACE objective of maintaining total offenses at or below average campus rates for the district. Overall the average referral rate for ACE campuses (107) was 33 offenses lower than the district campus average (140) for 2016-17, and ACE campuses overall reduced total offenses in 2016-17 by 677 referrals (53%) from 2015-16. ACE campuses reduced disciplinary offenses by 3,302 referrals (85%) over the past two years.

What were the outcomes of the parent and community partnership component?

The evaluator used district attendance files to calculate attendance rates for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date. Meeting attendance rate objectives was a struggle for ACE campuses in 2016-17. Two elementary schools, but no middle schools, maintained attendance rates of at least 96 percent. Overall, ACE attendance rates for the current year were comparable to those at non-ACE IR campuses, and did not meet or exceed rates for the district.

What were the 2016 accountability ratings for ACE campuses?

The ultimate test of program success designed to boost achievement for Improvement Required campuses is earning a Met Standard rating as the result of implementation. Six of the seven ACE campuses earned a Met Standard rating in 2016-17.

Recommendations

- **Keep focus on effective principals and teachers.** Effective administrators and teachers were the cornerstone of ACE successes. Therefore, they should continue to have the resources and professional development opportunities they need to lead and teach effectively, and they should continue to be rewarded financially and otherwise for their efforts.
- **Consider long-term transition plans for ACE 1.0 campuses with caution.** Although most ACE campuses have experienced tremendous academic success over the past two years, it is unknown what would happen to students should effective teachers be relocated to other campuses. Leadership should continue to carefully consider transition plans for ACE 1.0 campuses to avoid losing gains afforded by ACE participation.

- **Leverage heavily the experience of ACE 1.0 administrators and teachers to mentor ACE 2.0 campuses.** As suggested by principals, ACE leadership should leverage the wealth of experience of ACE 1.0 administrators and teachers to mentor those entering the program in the upcoming 2017-18 academic year.
- **Continue to maintain and expand training and support for behavioral management in the classroom.** Although there was both quantitative (decreased discipline referrals) and anecdotal (stakeholder perceptions) evidence that behavioral management improved on ACE campuses since program inception, teachers indicated that some improvement remained necessary, especially with regard to effectiveness and consistency of policy enforcement.
- **Continue efforts to strengthen parent involvement.** Teacher comments on surveys and low attendance rates support the notion that engaging parents may remain a challenge on ACE campuses. Stronger partnership with parents of ACE students will assist with improving and maintaining gains in important outcomes, such as discipline enforcement, attendance rates, and dedication to learning.
- **Prepare to evaluate long-term outcomes.** It will be important to evaluate long-term success as students move from ACE elementary school and middle school campuses into higher grades at other campuses. It is important to plan how this will be studied early in the program in order to increase the likelihood that the appropriate data and circumstances are in place for future evaluation.
- **Re-evaluate outcome objectives for 2017-18.** Evaluations for years one and two of the ACE program were designed around the early objectives of the ACE program. Certain data provided more insight than others. The evaluator and ACE leadership should carefully review and modify objectives, as appropriate.

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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