

2016-17 Evaluation of the Intensive Support Network

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EA17-616-4

At-a-Glance

The Intensive Support Network (ISN) was a Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) initiative started in 2016-17 to equip students at poorly-performing schools with the necessary tools to succeed. ISN replaced the Imagine 2020 initiative following the 2015-16 school year and included 18 campuses. Nine of the campuses held an *Improvement Required* accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for 2016-17. The goal of ISN was to help schools achieve or maintain a *Met Standard* accountability rating by reducing the student academic achievement gap with respect to ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Funding for ISN in the 2016-17 school year included \$142,281 of general operating funds and \$255,631 of Title I funds, for a total of \$397,912. Each campus also received funding for an additional assistant principal and an urban specialist.

ISN aimed to improve student outcomes and the quality of instruction by focusing on several components, including 1) Data Analysis - monitoring student progress, 2) Coaching - concentrating on professional development for teachers and administrative staff, 3) Collaboration - professional learning community planning by content and subject, 4) Monitoring Instruction - teacher observation, feedback, and follow-up, and 5) Student Management of Learning - students tracking their academic performance.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of ISN in helping campuses achieve a *Met Standard* accountability rating. The evaluators retrieved 2015-16 and 2016-17 district data files for *Assessments of Course Performance (ACPs)*, *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* mathematics and reading, attendance, and discipline referrals. The 2015-16 and 2016-17 district data files were merged with PEIMS demographic data from October 30, 2015 and October 31, 2016, respectively. In addition, the evaluators retrieved 2015-16 and 2016-17 Climate Survey data files for each ISN campus, and Human Capital Management provided a data file

with Dallas ISD teacher's creditable years of service as of October 31, 2016. To collect information about the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals, campus instructional coaches, and urban specialists at ISN campuses during the 2016-17 school year, evaluators administered 21-item, 18-item, and 21-item online surveys,¹ respectively. Furthermore, ISN program staff members provided a list of 439 students who were assigned to an urban specialist during the 2016-17 school year. This list was merged with 2015-16 and 2016-17 district data files for attendance and discipline referrals. Lastly, evaluators reviewed the TEA accountability ratings² to determine if ISN campuses received an *Improvement Required* or *Met Standard* accountability rating from the Texas Education Agency for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years.³

ISN Outcomes

Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)

While the *ACP* passing rates for kindergarten to grade two, elementary, and middle school students at ISN campuses were lower than the district in 2016-17, passing rates were slightly higher on almost all *ACPs* at ISN campuses in 2016-17 than in 2015-16.⁴ For kindergarten to grade two students at ISN campuses, the passing rate on the mathematics *ACP* was 76 percent for both fall 2015 and fall 2016, whereas the passing rate for the reading *ACP* was slightly higher in fall 2016 (81%) than fall 2015 (79%).⁵ For elementary students at ISN campuses, passing rates on the mathematics, reading, language arts, and science *ACPs* were higher in fall 2016 (46%, 52%, 47%, and 53%, respectively) than in fall 2015 (40%, 50%, 45%, and 45%, respectively).⁶ For middle school students at ISN campuses, the passing rate on the mathematics *ACP* was higher in fall 2016 (52%) than in fall 2015 (45%). Likewise, the passing rate on the reading *ACP* was higher in fall 2016 (62%) than in fall 2015 (57%). The passing rate on the science *ACP* was higher in fall 2016 (56%) than fall 2015 (46%) and was higher in spring 2017 (59%) than spring 2016 (50%). The passing rates on the social studies *ACP* was higher in fall 2016

¹ Surveys were administered using SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com).

² For more information about TEA accountability ratings, see <http://tea.texas.gov/2017accountabilitymanual.aspx>.

³ The Texas Education Agency assigned 2015-16 accountability ratings in August 2016 and assigned 2016-17 accountability ratings in August 2017.

⁴ Because *ACP* exams are scaled using each year's results, readers should use caution when comparing year-to-year *ACP* results. Longitudinal passing rate comparisons are provided for informational use only.

⁵ Kindergarten to grade two students did not take any *ACPs* in spring 2017.

⁶ Elementary students did not take the social studies *ACP* in fall 2016 or any *ACPs* in spring 2017.

(44%) than fall 2015 (41%) and was 48 percent for both spring 2016 and spring 2017.⁷

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)⁸

From 2016 to 2017, the rates of ISN students meeting or exceeding the Meets Grade Level standard on the STAAR mathematics exam trended upward by nine percentage points from 15 percent to 24 percent. The largest increase was found in grade eight, which increased by 16 percentage points from 16 percent in 2016 to 32 percent in 2017. From 2016 to 2017, the rates of ISN students meeting or exceeding the Meets Grade Level standard on the STAAR reading exam trended upward by three percentage points from 19 percent to 22 percent. The largest increase was found in grade eight, which increased by eight percentage points from 17 percent in 2016 to 25 percent in 2017.

Attendance

Overall, attendance rates for all ISN campuses were identical for both the fall (96%) and spring (95%) semesters of the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. These rates were also identical to the district.

Discipline Referrals

The number of discipline referrals at ISN campuses decreased from 3,908 in 2015-16 to 1,903 in 2016-17, for a total reduction of 2,005 referrals (51%). Overall, the percentage of students with one or more discipline referrals was higher at ISN campuses than the district during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. However, the percentage decreased by five percentage points from 13 percent in 2015-16 to eight percent in 2016-17.

School Climate

While the percentage of positive responses for almost every subscale was lower at ISN campuses than the district, the percentage of positive responses for every subscale at ISN campuses increased between one and four percentage points from fall 2015 to spring 2017.

Creditable Years of Service

Thirteen percent of teachers at ISN campuses were first-year teachers compared to 16 percent at ACE campuses and 11 percent for the district, respectively. ISN campuses had a larger percentage of teachers with

one to five (38%) creditable years of service than ACE campuses (28%) and for the district (34%). However, ISN campuses had a smaller percentage of teachers with six to 10 (14%) and 11 to 20 (21%) creditable years of service than ACE campuses (22% and 23%, respectively) and for the district (17% and 24%, respectively). ISN campuses had 14 percent of teachers with at least 20 creditable years of service, which was three percentage points higher than ACE campuses (11%) and the same percentage as the district (14%).

Perceptions of the Critical Success Factors

Between 88 percent and 94 percent of assistant principals who completed the online survey reported that each of the components of ISN were effectively implemented on their campuses. In addition, between 56 percent and 69 percent of assistant principals and between 57 percent and 74 percent of campus instructional coaches who completed the online survey agreed that the critical success factors for each of the components of ISN were achieved.

Role of ISN Campus Staff

Program Staff Surveys - Assistant Principals

All assistant principals who completed the online survey ($n = 16$) reported that they had at least four years of education experience, and 88 percent of assistant principals reported that they had at least one year of administrative experience. Sixty-three percent of assistant principals who responded to the survey rated their level of support as good, very good, or excellent. In addition, between 69 percent and 88 percent of assistant principals reported that they completed work related to each of the components of ISN on a daily or weekly basis.

Program Staff Surveys - Campus Instructional Coaches

All campus instructional coaches who completed the online survey ($n = 23$) reported that they had at least four years of education experience, and 96 percent of campus instructional coaches reported that they had at least one year of coaching experience. Eighty-seven percent of campus instructional coaches who responded to the survey rated their level of support as good, very good, or excellent. In addition, between 61 percent and 91 percent of campus instructional

⁷ Middle school students did not take mathematics and reading/language arts ACPs in spring 2017.

⁸ Readers should use caution when interpreting changes in STAAR results from year to year. Several exam structure and format changes were implemented in 2017. Therefore, the rates of students meeting or exceeding the Meets Grade Level standard provided in this report should be interpreted with caution because they were based on data from differing annual circumstances.

coaches reported that they completed work related to each of the components of ISN on a weekly or daily basis.

Program Staff Surveys - Urban Specialists

All urban specialists who completed the online survey ($n = 5$) reported that they served at least four years as an urban specialist, and 80 percent of urban specialists reported that they had at least two visits each week with a typical student. Between 60 percent and 100 percent of respondents also reported providing general services (e.g., attendance, academic, and discipline issues) to the campuses that they served on a daily or weekly basis. One-hundred percent of urban specialists also reported being confident or very confident in their abilities to 1) analyze and interpret student data to identify at-risk students, 2) collaborate with teachers and student services staff members to promote student academic success, 3) develop student intervention plans, and 4) work with families to promote student success. One-hundred percent of urban specialists reported that their principals at their campuses were supportive of their role as urban specialists, and 80 percent reported that they were utilized properly at their campus.

Outcomes for Students Assigned to Urban Specialists

Attendance Rates

Attendance rates for students who were assigned to an urban specialist during the 2016-17 school year were nearly identical from fall 2015 (95%) and spring 2016 (92%) to fall 2016 (94%) and spring 2017 (92%), respectively.

Discipline Referrals

The number of discipline referrals for students who were assigned to an urban specialist during the 2016-17 school decreased from 514 in 2015-16 to 432 in 2016-17, for a total reduction of 82 referrals (16%). However, a greater percentage of students who were assigned to an urban specialist had at least one discipline referral compared to all ISN students in 2015-16 and 2016-17. In addition, the percentage of students assigned to an urban specialist with one or more discipline referrals also slightly increased by two percentage points from 34 percent in 2015-16 to 36 percent in 2016-17.

Program Goal

As indicated in Table 1, 13 of the 18 ISN campuses received a *Met Standard* rating in 2016-17; five received an *Improvement Required* rating. In addition, four of the nine ISN campuses (44%) that received an *Improvement Required* accountability rating in 2015-16 received a *Met Standard* accountability rating for

2016-17. None of the ISN campuses that received a *Met Standard* accountability rating in 2015-16 received an *Improvement Required* accountability rating for 2016-17.

Table 1: 2016-17 TEA Accountability Ratings for ISN Campuses

Improvement Required	Met Standard
Middle Schools	
	Browne MS
	Cary MS
	Holmes MS
	Storey MS
Elementary Schools	
Carr ES	Bryan ES
Carver LC	Burleson ES
Dunbar LC	Cochran ES
Ray LC	McNair ES
Titche ES	Moreno ES
	Roberts ES
	Twain ES
	Webster ES
	W-H ES

Source: Texas Education Agency accountability data file from August 7, 2017. Blue indicates a campus that improved from an accountability rating of *Improvement Required* in 2015-16 to *Met Standard* in 2016-17.

Note: ES = elementary school; LS = learning center; MS = middle school; W-H = Wilmer-Hutchins.

Recommendations

- **Identify additional program goals to measure student progress at each campus.** The only explicit goal of the ISN program was for campuses to achieve the *Met Standard* accountability rating from the TEA; however, this goal did not allow student progress to be measured at campuses that experienced improvement but did not achieve a *Met Standard* accountability rating. Creating additional program goals with specific and measurable outcomes would improve the ability of ISN program staff members to identify whether campuses are improving and which aspects of the program are most effective.
- **Recruit fewer first-year teachers at ISN campuses.** Compared to the district, ISN campuses had a larger percentage of first-year teachers. The 2015-16 evaluation of the Teacher Excellence Initiative (Douglas & Barton, 2017) indicated that first-year teachers in Dallas ISD were more likely to receive lower summative performance evaluation scores, lower total student achievement scores, and fewer items with a positive response on the student survey on average than teachers with more creditable years of service. Thus, recruiting fewer first-year teachers might improve student performance at ISN campuses.

- **Continue using urban specialists to mentor students with attendance and behavior issues.** On average, students who were assigned to an urban specialist during the 2016-17 school year maintained their attendance rates and had fewer discipline referrals from 2015-16 to 2016-17. However, because each urban specialist served approximately 30 students at both of their assigned campuses, urban specialists were not able to dedicate all of their time at a single campus. It might be beneficial to explore ways to more strongly leverage the services of urban specialists so that schools with a larger number of high-needs students can receive more support.
- **Continue to provide professional development sessions to campus instructional coaches.** Because ISN campuses had a large percentage of first-year teachers or teachers with one to five creditable years of service, ISN program staff members focused on training the campus instructional coaches in high needs areas (e.g., writing, science, and math) by targeting specific SEs. Almost all campus instructional coaches reported that the professional development sessions that they received from ISN program staff members were helpful for coaching teachers and administrators. ISN program staff should continue to provide these professional development sessions for campus instructional coaches in order to provide teachers with resources and information regarding best practices in the classroom.
- **Improve the relation between each component of ISN and its critical success factors.** While most assistant principals believed that the components of ISN were effectively implemented at their campus, not all assistant principals and campus instructional coaches agreed that the critical success factors for each component of ISN had been achieved. ISN program staff members should review the critical success factors for each component of ISN to determine which indicators are appropriate and to identify specific and measurable outcomes for each success factor. Then, ISN program staff members should communicate to assistant principals and campus instructional coaches how each critical success factor will be measured to ensure the components of ISN are effectively implemented at their campus. This will help assistant principals and campus instructional coaches to understand more clearly how the critical success factors are related to the components of ISN and to identify when the components are being effectively implemented.
- **Carefully consider ISN program staffing needs to meet the demands of the program.** The

number of ISN program staff members did not appear adequate to meet the demands of the program during the 2016-17 school year. The evaluators experienced several delays when receiving data or information from the ISN program staff members during the school year. These delays appeared to be due to the large number of responsibilities placed on each program staff member.

- **Consider transition plans for campuses who achieve the *Met Standard* accountability rating.** One concern for ISN campuses is whether they will lose the extra campus personnel that they received from ISN (e.g., urban specialist and the additional assistant principal) once they receive the *Met Standard* accountability rating. Stability among campus personnel might be important to avoid losing gains afforded by participation in the ISN program. From 2015-16 to 2016-17, ISN campuses performed slightly better on almost all ACPs, had a slightly higher rate of students meeting or exceeding the Meets Grade Level standard for STAAR mathematics and reading, maintained their attendance rates, had fewer discipline referrals, and had a slightly greater percentage of positive responses on each subscale of the Climate Survey. However, it is unknown how long the additional ISN personnel are needed in order to have a lasting impact on each campus. ISN program staff members should consider transition plans for successful campuses in order to bolster the lasting benefits of the program.

References

Douglas, N. and Barton, M. (2017). Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI): 2015-16. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

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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