

2016-17 Evaluation of Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI)

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At-a-Glance

The Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) was a Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) initiative started in 2014-15 to improve student learning by improving teacher effectiveness. TEI replaced the previous tenure-based compensation system with an integrated system that defines, supports, and rewards teacher excellence. Teachers are evaluated each year based on teacher performance, student achievement, and student experience surveys. Effective teachers are provided the opportunity to significantly increase their salaries in a shorter period of time compared to a traditional tenure-based compensation system. In 2016-17, the TEI administrative budget was \$531,150, and the budget for 2017-18 teacher salaries, teacher benefits, and expert stipends based on 2016-17 TEI results totaled \$617,543,335. A total of 10,148 teachers received TEI scorecards for the 2016-17 school year.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of TEI to define, support, and reward teacher excellence. To examine spot observation scores and teacher summative performance evaluation scores from 2016-17, the evaluators used the Schoolnet data file from Human Capital Management dated October 9, 2017. In addition, Human Capital Management provided the scorecard data file from October 9, 2017, which included data for total student achievement, teacher-level student achievement, student learning objective points, distinguished teacher review (DTR) points, and compensation. To determine teacher retention rates, the scorecard data file was merged with the Dallas ISD personnel file dated April 30, 2017. Furthermore, the evaluators received the student survey data file from Office of Institutional Research dated November 2, 2017.

To collect feedback regarding teacher and administrator experiences with TEI during the 2016-17 school year, evaluators administered online surveys¹ from November 6 through November 27, 2017. Both teacher and administrator surveys included questions relevant to the three components of TEI: defining excellence, supporting excellence, and rewarding excellence. All teachers who received TEI scorecards for 2016-17 were emailed invitations to complete the survey. All principals and assistant principals who conducted TEI evaluations during the 2016-17

academic year were invited to complete the administrator survey. Based on these criteria, the evaluators invited 10,148 teachers (59.5% response rate) and 587 administrators (79.4% response rate) to complete perception surveys.

Results from the 2016-17 school year also were compared to 2014-15 TEI results (Douglas & Ure, 2015) to examine two-year trends.

TEI Outcomes

What were the results of the teacher performance component of defining excellence?

Spot Observations

The average overall spot observation score across all teachers was 2.00 out of three possible points. Spot observation scores statistically and practically improved from the beginning (1.66-2.00) to the end of the 2016-17 school year (2.05-2.31).

Summative Performance Evaluation

The mean (75.7) and median (76.8) summative performance evaluation scores for the 2016-17 school year indicated that teachers were performing slightly better on average than proficient. The overall summative performance evaluation score for middle school teachers (73.2) was significantly lower than for high school teachers (76.0) and elementary school teachers (76.2), but these differences were of weak practical significance. First-year teachers received the lowest average summative performance evaluation scores (59.1). Average summative evaluation scores gradually increased with service years and plateaued after three to five creditable years of service.

Relation Between Spot and Summative Scores

Average scores for each spot observation indicator and summative performance evaluation scores were highly correlated ($r = .73$ to $.82$). The strength of these correlations indicated that summative scores were generally aligned with classroom observations.

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

What were the results of the total student achievement component of defining excellence?

Total Student Achievement

Average total student achievement scores were 20.5, 21.4, 14.0, and 13.9 for Category A, Category B, Category C, and Category D teachers, respectively (out of possible 35 points for Category A/B teachers and 20 points for Category C/D teachers). First-year teachers earned the lowest average total student achievement scores, and scores for teachers with one or more creditable years of service remained consistent as years of service increased. These findings indicated that more years of service did not necessarily result in higher total student achievement scores.

Teacher-Level Student Achievement

The average teacher-level student achievement scores for Category A and B teachers were 13.6 and 14.2, respectively, out of a possible 25 points.

Student Learning Objective (SLO) Points

Seventy-five percent of teachers received the maximum number of points (five).

What were the results of the student experience component of defining excellence?

The average percentage of positive student survey responses for elementary school core teachers (86%) was significantly higher than for elementary school non-core (79%), middle school (68%), and high school (71%) teachers. First-year teachers received the lowest average percentage of positive responses (72%). The average percentage of positive student survey responses peaked at three to five years of service.

What were the correlations among the defining excellence components?

Teachers with higher summative performance evaluation scores tended to have higher total student achievement scores (Category A/B: $r = .46$; Category C/D: $r = .29$). Teachers with a higher percentage of positive responses on the student survey tended to have slightly higher total student achievement scores (Category A: $r = .26$; Category C: $r = .23$). Lastly, teachers with higher summative performance evaluation scores tended to have a higher percentage of positive responses on the student survey ($r = .34$).

What were the results of the Distinguished Teacher Review process?

A total of 1,857 teachers received DTR points. Most (91%) of these teachers successfully achieved a distinguished effectiveness level. These teachers represented 19 percent of all district teachers.

What were the results of the rewarding excellence (compensation) component of TEI?

Evaluation Scores

Average evaluation scores gradually increased as years of service increased and plateaued after three to five creditable years of service.

Salary Increases

Most (93%) of the 6,582 full-time teachers with a TEI scorecard received a pay increase from 2016-17 to 2017-18. Teachers with all effectiveness levels except Unsatisfactory received pay increases,² and, generally, teachers with higher effectiveness levels received higher salary increases.

What were retention rates for teachers?

Fourteen percent of 10,148 TEI teachers left the district during the 2016-17 school year. Fifty percent of teachers with an unsatisfactory effectiveness level were not retained, and the percentage of non-retained teachers within each effectiveness level decreased as the effectiveness level increased. Thus, Dallas ISD retained effective teachers at higher rates than less effective teachers.

What were the results of TEI by high school feeder pattern?

The district average summative performance evaluation score was 75.7 (feeder pattern range: 68.3-83.6). The average total student achievement score for Category A/B teachers was 20.7 (feeder pattern range: 15.0-25.9), and for Category C/D teachers was 13.9 (feeder pattern range: 10.1-16.8). For Category A/C teachers, the district average student experience score was 8.0 (feeder pattern range: 6.6-9.4). The district percentage of teachers achieving DTR was 19 percent (feeder pattern range: 5%-45%).

What were the results of TEI by teacher demographic groups?

Generally, 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

² Dallas ISD teachers were awarded a retention salary increase in 2017-18.

earned lower average scores than their counterparts who stayed in the district. First-year and Compass teachers earned the lowest scores. In addition, teachers at Improvement Required, Intensive Support Network, and majority African American campuses performed below the district average.

What were teacher and administrator experiences with TEI?

TEI Knowledge

Most teachers (73%) and almost all administrators (96%) reported at least intermediate TEI knowledge.

Overall Satisfaction

Administrators were more likely than teachers to express satisfaction with TEI, and teacher satisfaction tended to increase with effectiveness level.

Perception of Fairness

Administrators and teachers with Proficient II or higher effectiveness levels were more likely than other teachers to perceive TEI as at least somewhat fair. Administrators and teachers most frequently offered two common reasons for perceived TEI unfairness: 1) challenges facing lower performing schools compared to higher performing schools and 2) concerns regarding lack of consistency in evaluations across teachers.

Defining Excellence

Spot Observations, Extended Observations, and Summative Performance Evaluations

Some administrator respondents (18%) who conducted summative evaluations believed they were required to conduct performance evaluations for staff members with whom they had worked for an insufficient amount of time, and some (21%) indicated that they sometimes felt pressure to inflate teacher observation scores during 2016-17. Administrators were more likely than teachers overall to rate spot observations, extended observations, and summative evaluations as helpful, and more likely than teachers to rate highly the alignment of summative evaluation feedback and spot observation feedback. Teacher helpfulness and alignment ratings tended to increase as effectiveness level increased.

Student Experience Survey

A little over half (56%) of teacher respondents who received student experience survey data for 2016-17 highly rated the helpfulness of student experience survey feedback; ratings did not differ greatly by effectiveness level. Thirty-three percent of teachers

who received student experience survey feedback highly rated its accuracy; teacher accuracy ratings increased with effectiveness level. To modify student engagement, teachers most frequently turned to professional development (48%) and colleagues (41%), and least frequently used Panorama Playbook (9%).

Supporting Excellence

Teachers were asked to rate their experiences with district P2LD training, campus professional development, and district virtual P2LD training. Overall, teachers rated campus professional development sessions and district P2LD training as more helpful than district virtual P2LD training. Teachers and administrators agreed that additional professional development opportunities were most needed in classroom management and social-emotional learning.

Rewarding Excellence

Administrators were more likely than teachers to agree that the TEI compensation system 1) supports the recruitment and retention of teachers, 2) differentiates salaries to reward teachers who perform well, 3) will positively affect the future of Dallas ISD teachers, and 4) will result in teachers making more money over time than the old system. For all statements, teachers with higher effectiveness levels were more likely to respond favorably than those with lower effectiveness levels. Finally, over half of teacher respondents (59%) and most administrators (72%) indicated that adding a retention increase in 2017-18 at least somewhat improved TEI fairness. This sentiment was strongest for teachers with the highest effectiveness levels (i.e., Proficient II and higher).

Two-Year TEI Trends (2014-15 to 2016-17)

Key trends from 2014-15 to 2016-17 included 1) trending upward: average spot observation scores, average summative performance evaluation scores, average teacher evaluation scores, average teacher salaries in every effectiveness level except Unsatisfactory, teacher and administrator satisfaction with TEI, and teacher perceptions of TEI compensation system; 2) remained consistent: low performing teachers leaving the district at a higher rate than higher performing teachers; and 3) trended slightly downward: percentage of teachers who left the Dallas ISD.

Recommendations

- **School leadership and TEI staff members should review the following quantitative findings from the 2016-17 TEI evaluation to determine whether additional professional development or rubric calibration is needed for TEI:** 1) Middle school teachers had significantly lower summative evaluation ratings and a smaller

percentage of positive responses on the student survey compared to high school and elementary teachers, 2) 75 percent of teachers received all five SLO points in 2016-17, and 3) weak to moderate correlations were found among the defining excellence components of TEI (i.e., summative performance evaluation, total student achievement, and student experience).

- **Determine whether the increase in average spot observation and summative evaluation performance scores from 2014-15 to 2016-17 was primarily due to improvements in teacher performance or to administrator pressure to increase scores.** While the average spot observation and summative evaluation performance scores trended upward from 2014-15 to 2016-17, 21 percent of respondents to the administrator survey in 2016-17 indicated that they at least sometimes felt pressure to inflate observation scores. Determining to what extent this pressure impacted spot observation and summative evaluation scores might improve the ability of TEI to identify effective teachers.
- **Continue efforts to compensate teachers based on their effectiveness in the classroom rather than a traditional tenure-based compensation system.** From 2014-15 to 2016-17, the overall percentage of teachers who left the Dallas ISD has trended downward. Furthermore, the percentage of teachers who received an Unsatisfactory, Progressing I, or Progressing II effectiveness level and left the district has been higher than for teachers who received Proficient I and above effectiveness levels. This finding indicated that a larger percentage of low performing teachers left the district compared to higher performing teachers from 2014-15 to 2016-17. In addition, summative performance evaluation scores, total student achievement scores, evaluation scores, and the percentage of items with positive responses on the student survey improved as years of service increased and plateaued between three and five creditable years of service. Thus, more creditable years of service was not associated with higher scores on these measures after three to five years.
- **Continue efforts to improve the rate of teachers reporting an intermediate or advanced knowledge of TEI.** Twenty-seven percent of teacher respondents reported a basic or lower knowledge of TEI in 2016-17 compared to four percent of administrators. By improving the knowledge of teachers regarding TEI, teachers might have a more accurate perception of the TEI system, which also could mitigate the discrepancies between teacher and administrator perceptions of

TEI (e.g., overall satisfaction, fairness, and perceptions of compensation).

- **Continue efforts to address teacher and administrator concerns regarding TEI fairness.** For teachers and administrators who perceived low TEI fairness, two of the top five reasons for both groups were 1) challenges facing lower performing schools compared to higher performing schools, and 2) concerns regarding lack of consistency in evaluations across teachers. Improving teacher and administrator perceptions that TEI considers the challenges facing low performing schools and uses consistent evaluators might improve teacher and administrator perceptions of TEI.
- **Continue efforts to improve teacher perceptions that salaries based on effectiveness levels 1) adequately recognize their efforts to increase student achievement and 2) encourage them to stay in campus-based positions.** While over double the percentage of teachers with an effectiveness level of Proficient II and above agreed with both statements compared to teachers with lower effectiveness levels, approximately half of Proficient II and above teachers did not agree with these statements. Thus, improving the level of agreement with these items could also improve teacher perceptions of TEI.
- **Consider expanding professional development opportunities for teachers.** Both teachers and administrators agreed that classroom management and social-emotional learning were in the top three most needed topics of additional teacher professional development options. Teachers at different effectiveness levels prioritized needed professional development topics at different rates. Thus, addressing the professional development needs of teachers based on effectiveness levels might provide more specialized opportunities for professional growth.

References

Douglas, N. & Ure, A. (December 2015). Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI): 2014-15. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2017-18 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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