

2017-18 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 compared to a traditional tenure-based compensation system. In 2017-18, the TEI administrative budget was \$776,520, and the budget for 2017-18 teacher salaries, teacher benefits, and expert stipends based on 2017-18 TEI results totaled \$548,568,735. A total of 9,907 teachers received TEI scorecards for the 2017-18 school year, compared to 10,148 teachers in 2016-17.

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, the evaluators used the Schoolnet data file from Human Capital Management dated October 8, 2018. In addition, Human Capital Management provided the scorecard data file from October 8, 2018, 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 29, 2018. Furthermore, the evaluators received the student survey data file from Office of Institutional Research dated October 24, 2018.

To collect feedback regarding teacher and administrator experiences with TEI in 2017-18, evaluators administered online surveys from September 24 through October 15, 2018. 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 2017-18 were emailed invitations to complete the survey. All principals and assistant principals who conducted TEI evaluations during the 2017-18 academic year were invited to complete the administrator survey. Based on these criteria, the evaluators invited 8,577 teachers

(54% response rate) and 537 administrators (72% response rate) to complete perception surveys.

When applicable, results from the 2017-18 school year also were compared to 2015-16 TEI results (Douglas & Barton, 2017) 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 (1.69-2.03) to the end of the 2017-18 academic year (2.01-2.32).

Summative Performance Evaluation

In 2017-18, the mean (78.3) and median (80.8) summative performance evaluation scores indicated teachers were performing slightly better on average than proficient. Some scores were statistically different among middle school (75.1), high school (77.8), and elementary school (79.4) teachers, but these practical differences were relatively weak. While first-year teachers received the lowest average summative performance evaluation scores (62.7), scores gradually trended upward with service years and plateaued after three to five creditable years of service, indicating more years of service did not result in higher scores.

Relation Between Spot and Summative Scores

Spot observation scores and summative performance evaluation scores were highly correlated ($r = .70$ to $.79$). This result indicated summative scores were generally aligned with classroom observations.

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

Total Student Achievement

For TEI, teachers were classified into one of four categories (i.e., Category A, B, C, or D) based on which components were available for each teacher. Average total student achievement scores ranged between 20.6-21.2 for Category A/B teachers (out of 35 points)

and between 13.7-14.0 for Category C/D teachers (out of 20 points). First-year teachers earned the lowest average total student achievement scores, and scores for teachers with two or more creditable years of service remained relatively consistent as years of service increased, indicating more years of service did not necessarily result in higher scores.

Teacher-Level Student Achievement

The average teacher-level student achievement scores were 13.7 for Category A and 13.9 for Category B teachers, out of a possible 25 points.

Student Learning Objective (SLO) Points

In 2017-18, 81 percent of teachers received the maximum number of SLO points (five), an increase from 66 percent in 2015-16.

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

While there were statistically significant differences among the average percentage of positive student survey responses for elementary core teachers (86%), elementary non-core (79%), middle school (70%), and high school (72%) teachers, the practical differences were relatively small. Teachers with zero and at least 26 creditable years of service received the lowest average percentage of positive responses (72%). The average percentage of positive responses peaked at three to five creditable 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: $r = .49$; Category C/D: $r = .31$). 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 (DTR) process?

A total of 2,148 teachers received DTR points. Most (88%) of these teachers successfully achieved a distinguished effectiveness level. These teachers represented 22 percent of all district teachers, a slight increase from 19 percent in 2015-16.

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 six to seven creditable years of service, compared to three to five creditable years of service in 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Salary Increases

Most (95%) of the 7,992 full-time teachers with a TEI scorecard received pay increases from 2017-18 to 2018-19. Teachers with all effectiveness levels except Unsatisfactory received pay increases,¹ and, generally, teachers with higher effectiveness levels received higher salary increases.

What were retention rates for teachers?

Fifteen percent of 9,907 TEI teachers left the district during the 2017-18 school year. Forty-one percent of teachers with an Unsatisfactory effectiveness level were not retained, and the percentage of non-retained teachers decreased as effectiveness level increased. From 2015-16 to 2017-18, Unsatisfactory teachers continued to leave at higher rates than other effectiveness levels, indicating the Dallas ISD continued to retain 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 78.3 (feeder pattern range: 70.9-84.3). The average total student achievement score for Category A/B teachers was 20.7 (feeder pattern range: 15.2-24.5), and for Category C/D teachers was 13.8 (feeder pattern range: 11.3-15.5). For Category A/C teachers, the district average student experience score was 8.1 (feeder pattern range: 5.9-9.2). The district percentage of teachers achieving DTR was 21.5 percent (feeder pattern range: 5.8%-45.3%).

What were the results of TEI by teacher groups?

The highest performing groups were teachers at majority white campuses, magnet campuses, and teachers who stayed in the district but moved out of TEI-coded positions. Teachers who left the district earned lower average scores than their counterparts who stayed in the district, and the average scores for teachers at majority Hispanic campuses were nearly identical to the district scores because 81 percent of

¹ Teachers received a one-time stipend if they maintained their effectiveness level from 2017-18 to 2018-19. This stipend was not included in teacher salaries.

teachers taught at majority Hispanic campuses. However, first-year teachers, Teach for America teachers, and teachers at Improvement Required, Intensive Support Network, and majority African American campuses generally performed below the district averages. These results were similar to 2015-16 (Douglas & Barton, 2017) and 2016-17 (Barton & Palladino, 2018).

What were teacher and administrator experiences with TEI?

TEI Knowledge, Overall Satisfaction, and Perception of Fairness

In 2017-18, most teachers (72%) and administrators (98%) reported at least intermediate TEI knowledge. Like previous years, administrators were more likely than teachers in 2017-18 to express satisfaction with TEI, and teacher satisfaction tended to increase with effectiveness level. Administrators and teachers with higher effectiveness levels were more likely than other teachers to perceive TEI as at least somewhat fair. Administrators and teachers also reported that challenges facing lower performing schools compared to higher performing schools was one of the most common reasons for perceived TEI unfairness.

Defining Excellence

Spot Observations, Extended Observations, and Summative Performance Evaluations

The rate of administrators who reported that they conducted summative evaluations for staff members with whom they had worked for an insufficient amount of time trended downward from 2015-16 (28%) to 2017-18 (17%). The rate who at least sometimes felt pressure to inflate teacher observation scores remained relatively consistent from 2015-16 (21%) to 2017-18 (22%). The rate of administrators and teachers with higher effectiveness levels who rated spot and extended observations and summative performance evaluations as helpful was higher than teachers with lower effectiveness levels. A similar pattern of administrators and teachers rated summative performance evaluation feedback and spot observation feedback as aligned or very aligned, which was consistent with previous years.

Student Experience Survey

In 2017-18, higher rates of administrators (72%) than teachers (52%) rated student experience survey feedback as helpful to teachers. In addition, while a higher rate of administrators (51%) and Proficient II and higher teachers (38%) than teachers with lower effectiveness levels (27%-30%) rated student experience survey data feedback as very or completely

accurate, a sizeable percentage did not perceive student survey feedback as accurate.

Supporting Excellence

Teachers rated campus professional development sessions and district Personalized Professional Learning and Development (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

From 2015-16 to 2017-18, a greater rate of administrators than teachers agreed 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. Furthermore, less than half of administrators and less than a third of teachers reported that teacher salaries based on effectiveness level adequately recognize efforts to increase student achievement and encourage teachers to remain in campus-based positions

Two-Year TEI Trends (2015-16 to 2017-18)

Key trends from 2015-16 to 2017-18 included 1) trended upward: average summative performance evaluation scores, average evaluation scores, percentage of positive student survey responses, and administrator perceptions of the TEI compensation system; 2) remained consistent: correlations among the TEI components, the overall rate of teachers who left the district, the higher rate of low performing teachers than high performing teachers leaving the district, and the percentage of administrators who felt pressure to inflate teacher observation scores; and 3) trended downward: percentage of teachers who highly rated the alignment of summative and spot observation feedback, the percentage of teachers who rated TEI as at least somewhat fair, and teacher perceptions of helpfulness from student survey.

Recommendations

- **Review the following quantitative findings from the 2017-18 TEI evaluation to determine whether additional professional development or rubric calibration is needed for TEI:** 1) Middle school teachers earned lower summative evaluation ratings and a smaller percentage of positive responses on the student survey than high school and elementary school teachers; 2) 81 percent of teachers received all five SLO points in 2017-18, an increase from 66 percent in 2015-16;

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 2015-16 to 2017-18 was primarily due to improvements in teacher performance or to administrator pressure to increase scores.** While the average spot observation score remained consistent from 2015-16 to 2017-18, 22 percent of administrator respondents indicated they felt pressure to inflate scores, and summative evaluation performance scores trended upward from 2015-16 to 2017-18. Determining to what extent this pressure impacted spot observation and summative evaluation performance scores might improve the ability of TEI to identify effective teachers.
- **Continue efforts to compensate teachers based on classroom effectiveness rather than a traditional tenure-based compensation system.** A larger percentage of low performing teachers have left the district compared to higher performing teachers from 2015-16 to 2017-18. During this time, the overall percentage of teachers who left the Dallas ISD has remained relatively consistent. Furthermore, a larger percentage of low performing teachers have left the district compared to higher performing teachers from 2015-16 to 2017-18. In addition, creditable years of services has not been associated with higher scores on summative performance evaluation scores, total student achievement scores, or rates of positive responses on the student survey.
- **Review TEI results to address possible inequities in the district.** The highest performing groups were teachers at majority white campuses, teachers at magnet campuses, and teachers who stayed in the district but moved out of TEI-coded positions. In contrast, first-year teachers, Teach for America teachers, and teachers at IR, ISN, and majority African-American campuses generally performed below the district averages. Identifying the reasons that certain groups have performed below district averages on TEI-related measures may help address and remedy possible equity gaps.
- **Continue efforts to increase teacher knowledge of the TEI system.** While most teachers (72%) and almost all administrators (98%) reported an intermediate to advanced knowledge of TEI in 2017-18, 28 percent of teachers continued to report a basic or lower knowledge of the TEI system, indicating an opportunity for further training.

- **Continue efforts to address teacher and administrator concerns regarding the fairness of TEI.** The top reason teachers and administrators perceived low TEI fairness was challenges facing lower performing schools compared to higher performing schools. Evaluation rating cut points shifting annually was also ranked in the top five of concerns for administrators and most teachers. Increased communication regarding these concerns may improve administrator and teacher perceived fairness of TEI.
- **Continue to focus on 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 professional development topics. Furthermore, the professional development topics requested by teachers differed by effectiveness level. Addressing the professional development needs of teachers based on effectiveness levels might provide more specialized opportunities for professional growth.
- **Continue efforts to improve administrator and 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.** From 2015-16 to 2017-18, less than half of administrators (41% to 49%) and less than a third of teachers (27% to 30%) responded positively to these items. Agreement with both statements also differed by effectiveness level. Thus, improving administrator and teacher agreement with both items also could improve teacher perceptions of TEI and bolster acceptance of the system.

References

Barton, M. & Palladino, D. (February 2018). 2016-17 Evaluation of Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI). Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

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

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