

2018-19 Evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE)

Mitch Barton, Ph.D. & Sydney P. Rowles, Ph.D.

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At-a-Glance

Formed in 2015-16, Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) aimed to transform schools by assigning strong leadership and effective teachers to struggling campuses.

In 2018-19, five of the seven campuses from the first cohort of ACE campuses (ACE 1.0; Annie Webb Blanton, Billy Earl Dade, Umphrey Lee, Roger Q. Mills, and Sarah Zumwalt) rejoined their pre-ACE feeder patterns. Four of the six campuses from the second cohort (ACE 2.0; C.F. Carr, J.N. Ervin, Thomas J. Rusk, and Edward Titcher) participated in their second year of the program in 2018-19. These campuses continued to receive competitive stipends to incentivize top teachers and principals to serve some of the district's most challenged campuses. Lastly, seven campuses joined the third cohort in 2018-19 (ACE Leadership 3.0; Cesar Chavez, Paul L. Dunbar, L.L. Hotchkiss, Maple Lawn, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elisha M. Pease, and Joseph J. Rhoads). Leadership teams of 12 to 14 teachers at these campuses were offered stipends for eight hours of weekly leadership work in professional development, curriculum alignment, data analysis, positive culture building, and the development of strong parent and community partnerships. The total budget for the 2018-19 ACE program was \$8,642,709, which was a decrease from \$9,885,862 in 2017-18.

The ACE program aimed to improve student achievement by focusing on three general components: *People, Learning, and Expectations*.

People. To accelerate factors related to people, ACE campuses were staffed with strong principals and effective teachers. Progress related was measured by examining 1) teacher retention rates, 2) Teacher Effectiveness Initiative (TEI) effectiveness levels, and 3) quintile scores¹ on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the Climate Survey.

Learning. To accelerate factors related to learning, ACE staff members participated in supplemental professional development opportunities and committed to excellence in both academic and social-emotional learning. Progress was measured by examining 1) *Station's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)* Tier 1 rates, 2) *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)* passing rates, and 3) *State of Texas Assessments of Academic*

Readiness (STAAR) performance standard attainment rates.

Expectations. To accelerate factors related to expectations, ACE campuses emphasized relationships among campus community members. Progress was measured by 1) disciplinary offense rates, 2) attendance rates, 3) Student Experience Survey favorable response rates, and 4) Parent/Guardian Survey favorable response rates.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide data for campus, program, and district leadership to evaluate progress toward year-four objectives established by ACE program staff members and to provide analysis of some additional applicable outcomes. When applicable, data were provided for ACE cohorts and the Dallas ISD. For comparison purposes, the evaluators also used data from previous years to track longitudinal changes for each ACE cohort, when applicable.²

What were the student, teacher, and principal characteristics of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses?

Over half of ACE students were male (52%), 93 percent were either African American (50%) or Hispanic (43%), and most were economically disadvantaged (99%). Over a third of students were English Learners (36%), and 10 percent were enrolled in special education. The 401 teachers on ACE campuses were 79 percent female, about 83 percent African American (52%) or Hispanic (30%), and 29 percent held at least a master's degree. Over half of teachers (62%) had received a TEI effectiveness level of Proficient I or higher. The 11 ACE principals were 64 percent female, 64 percent African American, 27 percent Hispanic, and most held at least a master's degree (91%).

What were teacher and campus leadership perceptions of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0?

Teachers. In response to an online survey in 2018-19, teacher perceptions of the ACE program were generally positive. At least 59 percent of ACE teachers reported that each key factor (i.e., instructional rigor, data analysis and professional learning communities,

¹ A quintile is any of five equal groups into which a population can be divided according to the distribution of values of a particular variable. A positive quintile score indicates scores in the fourth or fifth quintile.

² Previous data for all ACE cohorts were reported for the year before entering the ACE program and for 2017-18.

balanced literacy, social-emotional learning) was implemented effectively. Twenty-seven percent of ACE teachers selected improved behavioral management support as the most important potential change that could improve future success. Fifty-four percent of teacher respondents agreed that parents of students at their campuses were engaged with their child's progress. Almost half of respondents (46%) reported that they would recommend that a colleague accept a position at an ACE campus.

Principals/Assistant Principals. In response to an online survey, combined ACE administrator perceptions were generally positive. In 2018-19, at least 58 percent of ACE administrators reported that they believed that each key factor (i.e., instructional rigor, data analysis and PLC, balanced literacy, social-emotional learning) was implemented effectively. They considered the greatest change that could improve future success to be improved behavioral management support (27%). The majority of ACE administrators reported that parents of students at their campuses were engaged with their children's progress (73%). Lastly, most administrator respondents indicated that they would recommend that a colleague accept an administrative (87%) or teaching position (87%) at an ACE campus.

What were the outcomes related to the people component of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0?

Teacher retention. The teacher retention rate for ACE 2.0 (64%) did not meet the objective of exceeding the district rate (70%). While the retention rate for ACE Leadership 3.0 was 30 percent, this result was expected because 2018-19 was the first year of participation in the ACE program.

Climate survey. In spring 2019, two ACE 2.0 (Carr/Carver and Titcher) and four ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses (Chavez, Dunbar, Hotchkiss, King) met the objective of achieving scores in the fourth or fifth quintile (most positive) on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the Climate Survey.

What were the outcomes related to the learning component of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0?

ISIP. Overall, ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 met the objective of achieving rates of Tier 1 students at or above district rates. In 2018-19, the rate of ACE 2.0 (range: 63% to 97%) and ACE Leadership 3.0 (range: 56% to 78%) students who read on grade level trended upward for most six-week periods for all grade levels and eventually exceeded district rates (range: 47% to 62%).

From 2016-17 to 2018-19, ACE 2.0 exceeded district growth across the board. The percentage of ACE 2.0 students reading on grade level for kindergarten (K) to grade two trended upward by at least 33 percentage points for combined English and Spanish. From 2017-18 to 2018-19, ACE Leadership 3.0 matched or exceeded district growth across the board. The percentage of ACE Leadership 3.0 students reading on grade level for K-2 trended upward by at least 19 percentage points for combined English and Spanish.

ACP. ACE 2.0 students met the objective of passing rates within 10 percentage points or exceeding district rates on 40 (87%) of 46 fall exams and on five (71%) of seven spring exams, and ACE Leadership 3.0 students met this objective on 19 (86%) of 24 fall exams.

STAAR. ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 students met the goal of achieving rates at least within 10 percentage points of the district for all subjects at the Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+), Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+), and Masters Grade Level (Masters) performance standards.

ACE 2.0 students met the 2018-19 objective of STAAR performance standard attainment rates within at least 10 percentage points of or exceeding district rates on 16 (89%) of 18 exams at the Approaches+ level and on 17 (94%) of 18 exams at the Meets+ level. ACE Leadership 3.0 students met the 2018-19 objective on all STAAR exams (100%) at the Approaches+ and Meets+ level.

Lastly, ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses met the goal of being at least within 10 percentage points of district rates of students with Expected and Accelerated ratings on STAAR reading and mathematics progress measures. For the mathematics STAAR progress measure, the percentage of ACE 2.0 students in 2019 at the Accelerated level (26%) exceeded the district rate (20%), and for the reading STAAR progress measure, the percentage at the Expected (39%) and Accelerated (25%) levels matched district rates. In addition, ACE Leadership 3.0 had the highest percentage of all groups examined of students at the Accelerated level for mathematics (39%) and reading (35%).

What were the outcomes related to the expectations component of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0?

Disciplinary offenses. While the average rate of discipline offenses at ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 elementary campuses exceeded district rates in 2018-19, ACE 2.0 middle school campuses met the objective of having discipline offenses at or below the district average. ACE 2.0 total offenses slightly increased by 26 (9%) from 2017-18 to 2018-19, but these campuses successfully reduced their disciplinary

offenses by 1,182 (79%) over two years of program participation. ACE Leadership 3.0 total offenses decreased by 330 (63%) in the first year of the program.

Attendance rates. In 2018-19, ACE 2.0 (96.4%) met the ACE objective of achieving an attendance rate at or above 96 percent, whereas ACE Leadership 3.0 (95.8%) barely missed the objective. In addition, while the attendance rate for the district was relatively consistent from 2016-17 to 2018-19, the attendance rate for ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 trended slightly upward over time.

Student Experience survey. ACE students generally responded favorably on the student survey. In 2019, ACE 2.0 elementary schools (87%) and middle schools (74%) met the objective of exceeding the overall favorable rate for the district at the elementary school (86%) and middle school (71%) level, and ACE Leadership 3.0 elementary school favorable response rates (85%) were slightly lower than the district rate.

For ACE 2.0, the overall percent favorable ratings from 2016-17 to 2018-19 increased for elementary schools (76% to 87%) and for middle schools (62% to 74%). For ACE Leadership 3.0, the overall percent favorable ratings from 2017-18 to 2018-19 increased from 79 percent to 85 percent.

Parent/Guardian Survey. Parent perceptions of ACE were generally positive. The ACE 2.0 overall positive response rate (89%) met the objective of slightly exceeding the district positive response rate (88%), and the ACE Leadership 3.0 rate (86%) was slightly lower than the district response rate.

What were the outcomes related to the district Climate Survey, ISIP, STAAR, attendance, and discipline for ACE 1.0 campuses?

Climate survey. Overall, ACE 1.0 campuses struggled during and after the program with campus climate. By the end of spring 2019, one ACE 1.0 campus (U. Lee) met the objective of achieving scores in the fourth or fifth quintile (most positive) on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the climate survey, and four of the six campus scores were in the first or second quintile (least positive).

ISIP. Overall, the rate of ACE 1.0 students who read on grade level trended upward for most six-week periods from beginning to the end of the school year for all grade levels. While the rate of ACE 1.0 students reading at or above grade level met the objective of exceeding

the district by the end of the 2018-19 school year, rates of ACE 1.0 students reading at or above grade level generally were lower in 2018-19 than the previous year.

STAAR. ACE 1.0 students met the objective of achieving within at least 10 percentage points of the district for mathematics (Approaches+ and Masters), reading (Masters), writing (Meets+ and Masters), science (Masters), and social studies (Masters). None of the ACE 1.0 rates met or exceeded the district rates in any subject at any performance standard. While the rate of ACE 1.0 students achieving the Approaches+, Meets+, and Masters performance standards trended downward from 2017-18 to 2018-19, the rates in 2018-19 remained higher than pre-ACE levels

Lastly, for the mathematics and reading progress measures, the percentage of ACE 1.0 students with Limited ratings exceeded the district in 2019, and the percentages of students with Expected or Accelerated ratings for mathematics and reading were slightly below the district, indicating a need for caution to avoid further erosion of strong past gains.

Disciplinary offenses. In addition, ACE 1.0 elementary and middle schools met the objective of having discipline offenses at or below the district average for elementary and middle schools. While ACE 1.0 reported a slight increase in total offenses by 52 (11%) from 2017-18 to 2018-19, campuses successfully reduced disciplinary offenses by 2,772 (84%) from 2014-15 to 2018-19.

Attendance rates. In 2018-19, ACE 1.0 did not meet the ACE objective of achieving an attendance rate at or above 96 percent. However, while the attendance rate for the district was relatively consistent from 2014-15 to 2018-19, the attendance rate for ACE 1.0 trended slightly upward from 2014-15 (94.0%) to 2018-19 (94.9%).

What were the 2018 ACE state accountability ratings?

The ultimate goal of the ACE program was for all ACE campuses to earn or maintain a passing accountability rating letter grade designation.³ In 2018-19, all 11 of the ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses received a passing accountability rating between A and D. The one campus that was formerly an *Improvement Required* campus in 2017-18 received a passing accountability rating in 2018-19 (Pease). For ACE 1.0, five of six campuses received a passing accountability rating between A and D. One formerly *Met Standard* campus earned a failing accountability rating in 2018-19

³ Prior to 2018-19, campuses received either a *Met Standard* or *Improvement Required* designation. In 2018-19, campuses received an accountability rating of A, B, C, D, or F. Letter grades between A and D were considered passing.

(Mills). Overall, one campus received a state grade of A, eight campuses received a B, five campuses received a C, two campuses received a D, and one campus received a F. These findings are a strong indicator of academic support resulting from the ACE program.

Recommendations

- **Compare the progress of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 cohorts over time.** In 2018-19, student outcomes improved for both ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses. Overall, both cohorts met the program objectives relating to *ISIP*, *ACPs*, *STAAR*, *STAAR* progress measures, and attendance. Because ACE 2.0 campuses were enrolled in the original program and ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses were enrolled in the hybrid program, monitoring the progress of both cohorts will be invaluable for shaping future programs that target school improvement.
- **Monitor transitioning campuses.** Because most ACE 1.0 campuses fully transitioned out of the ACE program at the end of 2018-19, the district should evaluate how well these campuses perform now that they are no longer involved with the ACE program. For example, most ACE 1.0 campuses experienced downward trends in *ISIP* and *STAAR* from 2017-18 to 2018-19. While passing rates for *ISIP* and *STAAR* in 2018-19 remained higher than pre-ACE levels, the district should continue to monitor the ongoing progress of these campuses to avoid continued decline.
- **Evaluate long term outcomes.** As ACE students move into higher grades at other campuses, long term outcomes should be evaluated to determine the lasting benefit of ACE participation. This could include examining dosage of years enrolled on ACE campuses and comparing ACE students with similar students who were not enrolled on ACE campuses on long term achievement outcomes (e.g., assessments, college and career readiness, graduation rates, and college enrollment).
- **Review and adjust professional development to support campus leaders and teachers.** Because a small rate of teacher respondents (29%) and administrator respondents (17%) to the survey reported that teachers had received sufficient training in all of the areas they needed, ACE program staff members should evaluate the needs of the ACE teachers and administrators to determine the additional resources and professional development they need to lead and teach effectively.
- **Continue focusing on literacy.** Although not unique to ACE students, the percentage of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 students achieving the Approaches+ performance standard in reading and writing in 2018-19 was generally weaker than for

other subjects, especially mathematics. ACE campuses should continue to focus on improving literacy at all grade levels to reduce this discrepancy.

- **Maintain and expand training and support for behavioral management in the classroom.** While the total number of disciplinary offenses has decreased over time, both ACE teachers and administrators in 2018-19 selected behavioral management support as the most important potential change that could improve future success for teachers. This finding indicated that additional support might be needed in this area.
- **Strengthen social-emotional learning implementation on ACE campuses.** In 2018-19, 38 percent of ACE 2.0 teacher respondents reported that social-emotional learning was implemented effectively compared to 68 percent of ACE 2.0 administrator respondents. This disparity indicated that additional strategies might be needed to help teachers implement social-emotional learning strategies on ACE campuses.
- **Strengthen parent involvement.** Despite evidence of expanded encouragement of parent involvement and parent/guardian survey favorable response rates near district rates, only half of teacher respondents (54%) agreed that ACE parents were engaged in their children's progress during the school year compared to 73 percent of administrator respondents. Thus, leadership should continue its strong efforts to increase interest, pride, and involvement from parents at ACE campuses.
- **Continue efforts to improve campus climate.** While quintile scores for ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the Climate Survey generally improved over time, quintile scores for ACE 1.0 indicated that five of the six campuses continued to struggle post-program. ACE program staff members should continue efforts to help campuses struggling with improving campus climate.

Reference

Palladino, D. K. & Barton, M. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE). Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2018-19 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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Department of Evaluation and Assessment
H. B. Bell School Support Service Center
2909 N. Buckner Blvd.
Box 10
Dallas, TX 75228