

2018-19 Evaluation of Public School Choice

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At-a-Glance

Public School Choice (PSC) is an initiative born out of the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) to help all Dallas independent School District (ISD) students find their “best-fit school.” An important characteristic of the PSC initiative was the implementation of a schoolwide anchor model. Transformation Schools and Innovation Schools are the focus of this evaluation. In 2018-19, Dallas ISD operated nine Transformation Schools and 16 Innovation Schools. Transformation Schools were new schools without traditional attendance zones whereas Innovation Schools were existing schools and limited to the students within the school’s attendance zone.

The total amount available for 2018-19 was \$4,775,402. The funding amount included \$4,248,677 from district funds and \$526,725 from Title II funds. This was an increase from \$2,742,509 available for 2017-18. A component of the PSC initiative included budget autonomy, which allowed school administrators to decide how they allocated funds and allowed them to roll over funds for up to three years.

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the 1) the characteristics of Transformation and Innovation Schools; 2) administrator and teacher perceptions of PSC; and 3) the outcomes of Choice School students.

Methodology

Contextual information was gathered from internal documents and interviews. Student data were extracted from the November 2018 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file for analyses. The results of *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, and the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* 3-8 and *STAAR End of Course (EOC)* exams were extracted from Dallas ISD’s district files. PSC Survey, District Climate Survey and Student Experience Survey results were also analyzed. Frequency and crosstabs analyses were tabulated. The qualitative data were synthesized.

Implementation of Choice Schools

An important characteristic of the PSC initiative was the implementation of a schoolwide anchor model. Dallas ISD staff members used available resources (i.e., websites, books, and curriculum developers) to develop the model. OTI supported seven different anchor models among 25 schools: 1) Montessori; 2) science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics (STEAM); 3) science, technology, engineering, and

mathematics (STEM); 4) leadership; 5) International Baccalaureate; 6) personalized learning; and 7) urban planning, architecture, and community development.

A total of 13,505 students attended a Choice School in 2018-19, which was an increase from 10,176 students in 2017-18. Most (n=10,648) attended an Innovation School and the remaining 2,857 students attended a Transformation School. Table 1 reports the characteristics of Dallas ISD Choice Schools. Most students were Hispanic (73.2%) and economically disadvantaged (82.7%); 46.6 percent were English Learners (ELs).

Table 1: 2018-19 Dallas ISD Choice Schools

Choice School and Anchor Model	Grades Served	Students N
Transformation Schools		
Montessori Academy (Montessori)	PK to 2	176
Mata ES (Montessori)	PK to 5	613
P.L. Prep (Personalized Learning)	PK to 2	203
Solar Preparatory School for Boys (STEAM)	PK to 2	220
Solar Preparatory School for Girls (STEAM)	K to 3	460
Hulcy STEAM MS (STEAM)	6 to 8	533
Ignite MS (Personalized Learning)	6	189
CityLab HS (Urban Planning)	9 to 10	147
IDEA HS (Personalized Learning)	9 to 12	316
<i>All Transformation Schools</i>		<i>2,857</i>
Innovation Schools		
De Zavala ES (Montessori)	PK to 5	443
Donald ES (Leadership)	PK to 5	432
Douglass ES (STEM)	PK to 5	540
Rogers ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	507
Botello ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	542
Chapel Hill Preparatory (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	472
Geneva Heights ES (IB)	PK to 5	402
Lipscomb ES (IB)*	PK to 5	451
Kramer ES (IB)*	PK to 5	628
Preston Hollow ES (IB)*	PK to 5	453
Reagan ES (STEAM)	PK to 5	345
Richardson ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	691
Weiss ES (Leadership)	PK to 5	511
Marsh PA (Personalized Learning)	6 to 8	963
Franklin International (IB)*	6 to 8	1,105
B. Adams HS (Leadership)	9 to 12	2,163
<i>All Innovation Schools</i>		<i>10,648</i>
All Choice Schools		13,505

Source: Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) district demographic data file (10/26/18).

Note: STEAM=Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. STEM=Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. ES=Elementary School. PA=Preparatory Academy. MS=Middle School. HS=High School. IB=International Baccalaureate. ISD=Independent School District. P.L.=Personalized Learning. *These schools were funded by OTI as conditional Innovation Schools and will be official Innovation Schools when they earn IB authorization.

Student and School Selection Processes

Students who lived in Innovation School attendance zones were automatically selected to attend, whereas, the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) utilized a lottery process to select from the pool of student applicants for Transformation Schools. After the lottery process, OTI conducted an equity audit to ensure a wide range of socioeconomic diversity in the schools. Waitlisted students could be granted enrollment to meet equity goals.

Due to high demand, there were markedly more applications submitted than seats available across all four years of the initiative. Student acceptance rates were 43 percent of applied students in the spring of 2015, 38 percent in the spring of 2016, 36 percent in the spring of 2017, 59 percent in the spring of 2018, and 39 percent in the spring of 2019. Of the 1,132 students accepted to a Transformation School in the spring of 2019, it was positive that approximately 22 percent enrolled in prekindergarten at a Transformation School and approximately 19 percent were not enrolled in a Dallas ISD school but lived within Dallas ISD boundaries at the time of application (i.e., recaptured).

OTI established a rigorous three-step application process for school teams wanting to initiate a Choice School. The process required each team to submit a proposal to be reviewed by the School Choice Committee (SCC) followed by two rounds of interviews. During the 2018-19 application process, 14 applications were submitted, and 10 schools were selected to launch in 2019-20. One additional Choice School was absorbed into the PSC initiative.

Of the five Transformation School applications received, two schools were selected: an Exploratory Fine Arts K-8 school and a Digital, Visual, and Creative Arts high school. New Tech High School at B.F. Darrell did not go through the formal selection process but was also named a Transformation School. Nine Innovation School applications were submitted and eight were selected as 2019-20 Choice Schools. Five campuses were selected as personalized learning schools: Ignacio Zaragoza Elementary School, Arturo Salazar Elementary School, Leila P. Cowart Elementary School, H.B. Gonzalez Elementary School, and Jack Lowe Elementary School. Ronald E. McNair Elementary School was selected as a STEAM campus. Two more schools, Birdie Alexander Elementary School (personalized learning) and Kleberg Elementary School (STEAM) were named as Innovation Pilot Schools for 2019-20.

Public School Choice Survey Results

Choice School staff members were asked to complete a PSC survey in April 2019. Results were positive

overall. However, responses were more positive for Transformation School teachers than Innovation School teachers toward the Choice model and campus leadership. Two differences were especially notable. Ninety-three percent of Transformation School teachers and 79 percent of Innovation School teachers indicated that they could confidently explain their school's Choice model to a colleague. Ninety-three percent of Transformation School respondents and 77 percent of Innovation School respondents agreed that their principal engaged in distributed leadership practices.

The most cited successes were improvements in students' social-emotional skills (n=41), increased student achievement (n=37), and students' ownership in the learning process (n=28). The main challenges were demands on teachers' time (n=57) and lack of resources (n=49). As for principals, seven described an increase in student achievement and six indicated that students' social-emotional skills improved as a result of Choice model implementation. Ten principals described challenges related to creating an innovative learning framework in a traditional environment.

District Climate Survey Results

The district Climate Survey is administered each fall and spring. It includes six Likert scales: 1) Beliefs and Priorities, 2) Positive Culture and Environment, 3) Culture of Feedback and Support, 4) Teacher-Teacher Trust, 5) Principal-Teacher Trust, and 6) College-Going Culture. The first two scales were administered to all campus professional support staff. The next three scales were administered to teachers only and the last scale was administered to teachers and campus administrators. On average, Transformation Schools had over 70 percent positive ratings on all six scales. Innovation Schools had over 70 percent positive ratings on the Beliefs and Priorities, Teacher-Teacher Trust, and College-Going Culture scales.

Across two years of administration (spring 2018 and spring 2019), results were higher for Transformation Schools than Innovation Schools in most cases. For spring 2019, Transformation School results were higher than the district on all six scales, whereas Innovation School results were higher than the district on two (Positive Culture and Environment; and Teacher-Teacher Trust) out of six scales. From year to year, the greatest increase in scores was on Transformation School teachers' ratings on the Teacher-Teacher Trust scale (+6.6 percent). The greatest decrease in scores was on Innovation School teachers' ratings on the Principal-Teacher Trust scale (-11.1 percent). Comparatively, ratings on all scales across the district changed minimally (-1.3 to 2.1) from 2018 to 2019.

District Student Experience Survey Results

The district Student Experience Survey is administered to students in grades three to 12 each spring. The survey addresses five areas: 1) classroom environment, 2) expectations and rigor, 3) pedagogical effectiveness, 4) student engagement, and 5) supportive relationships. Students were asked to complete surveys for two of their teachers.

The district's Student Experience Survey results showed elementary Choice School student responses were more positive than secondary Choice School student responses. Elementary Innovation School student responses were higher than Transformation School and district student responses. Additionally, elementary Transformation School results increased on four scales from 2018 to 2019. In contrast, Transformation School student responses were more positive than Innovation School responses on the secondary Student Experience Survey. For spring 2019, secondary Transformation and Innovation School results were higher than the district on all five scales with one exception. Student survey results varied widely when reviewed by school.

Choice Student Outcome Results

TerraNova, *SUPERA*, *STAAR*, and *STAAR EOC* results varied by Choice campus, grade level, and subject area, but were generally positive.

Students at Transformation and Innovation Schools outperformed the district on the 2018-19 *TerraNova* reading and mathematics assessments but performed lower than the district on *SUPERA*. Across three years of analyses, Transformation School students achieved at a positive trend on the *TerraNova* mathematics assessment and a negative trend on the *TerraNova* reading assessment. Additionally, Transformation School students' scores on the *SUPERA* reading assessment increased from 2016-17 to 2017-18 but decreased in 2018-19. Across three years of analyses, Innovation School students' scores decreased on the *SUPERA* reading assessment. From 2016-17 to 2017-18, Innovation School students' scores increased on the *TerraNova* reading assessment and then slightly decreased in 2018-19, whereas their scores decreased on the *TerraNova* mathematics assessment from 2016-17 to 2017-18, but then increased in 2018-19.

Students at Transformation Schools outperformed the district on the *STAAR* social studies (approaches standard), science (approaches and meets standards), reading, mathematics, and writing (approaches, meets, and masters standards) assessments. Additionally, across three years of analyses, Transformation School students achieved at a positive trend on the *STAAR* reading (approaches and masters standards), writing

(meets and masters standards), and mathematics (approaches, meets, and masters standards) assessments. A negative trend was noted on the *STAAR* science assessment (masters standard). Students at Innovation Schools outperformed the district on the *STAAR* mathematics, writing, science (approaches standard) and social studies (approaches and masters standards) assessments. Innovation School students achieved at a positive trend on the *STAAR* reading, mathematics (approaches, meets, and masters standards), writing (meets and masters standards), and science (approaches and meets standards) assessments.

Students at Transformation Schools outperformed the district on the Biology *EOC* (approaches standard), English I and English II *EOCs* (approaches and meets standards), and Algebra I and U.S. History *EOCs* (approaches, meets, and masters standards). Additionally, across three years of analyses, Transformation School students achieved at a positive trend on the English I *EOC* and Algebra I *EOC* (meets and masters standards). A negative trend was noted on the Biology *EOC* (meets and masters standards). Students at Innovation Schools outperformed the district on the English I, Biology, and U.S. History *EOCs* (approaches and meets standards) and on the Algebra I *EOC* (approaches, meets, and masters standards). Innovation School students also performed at a positive trend across three years on the English II *EOC* (meets standard), Biology *EOC* (masters standard), U.S. History *EOC* (meets and masters standards), and on the Algebra I *EOC* (approaches, meets, and masters standards).

Attendance rates for most Choice Schools were higher than the district in 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. Across all phases of PSC implementation and all years of analyses, fewer students at most Choice schools were identified as having chronic absenteeism compared to the district.

While more discipline referrals were reported for 2018-19 Choice students compared to 2017-18, more students attended those schools in 2018-19. Fewer discipline referrals were reported for 2018-19 than in 2017-18 for the district. Most referrals were Level II and the least were Level IV. Reported offenses varied by campus.

Recommendations

- **Continue to provide necessary resources for Choice model implementation.** Per PSC survey results, Choice teachers and administrators indicated that they needed additional technology, professional development, staff, and Spanish materials to successfully implement the model.

- **Find ways to provide teachers more time to plan lessons under the Choice model.** PSC survey results indicated planning lessons within the model required more time of teachers than they felt they had.
- **Work to align Choice models to district and state expectations.** PSC survey results and interviews with principals revealed concerns over pressure to maintain fidelity to the Choice model while meeting state and district expectations.

References

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An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2018-19 report can be found at <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/42559>. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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