

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Differentiated Instructional Support for District (DISD) Needs program in the Dallas Independent School District (ISD), previously known as the Instructional Lead Coaches Structure, was created in 2018-19 to improve the collaboration between Instructional Lead Coaches (ILCs), Teaching and Learning, and School Leadership (SL). The goal of the ILCs was to empower and build capacity within campus instructional coaches (CICs) and assistant principals (APs). To accomplish this goal, ILCs served as the bridge for SL to provide direct campus instructional support. Each ILC reported to an Executive Director (ED) and worked closely with content and instructional experts from the Teaching and Learning department to increase depth of knowledge and to create professional development (PD) for teachers, CICs, principals, and APs. ILCs ensured curriculum implementation fidelity by attending professional sessions and by coaching instructional practices that support and enhance student achievement. They also learned key coaching competencies that promote innovative change and improvement at district campuses.

In 2019-20, SL guided the work of ILCs to maintain strong accountability for implementing district priorities and to improve the blended learning instructional model. The services that ILCs provided campus staff members included 1) assisting with the implementation of district curricula, 2) developing action plans, 3) providing feedback for action plans, 4) on-site coaching of teachers, 5) organizing PD sessions; 6) guiding Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), 7) reviewing and interpreting campus data, and 8) working with campus administration on instructional practices. ILCs also received training most Fridays (ILC Fridays).¹

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic districtwide transition to at-home learning, the DISD Needs program staff members directed ILCs to provide several new supports.² During at-home learning, ILCs transitioned to providing all PLCs to teachers virtually. They also created lesson plans and monitored teachers in virtual classrooms. These observations were used to determine how content was being shared with students and to provide feedback to teachers. In addition, ILCs started working with Teaching and Learning to create new at-home lessons for the

upcoming 2020-21 school year that could be used in-person or virtually. These lesson plans were designed to provide flexibility if at-home learning was used again in 2020-21. Lastly, ILCs provided support for teachers experiencing technology issues, and ILCs continued to attend virtual meetings with teachers and parents, as needed.

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an overview of the implementation of the DISD Needs program, including funding, program staff member characteristics, PD opportunities, and the perceptions of participants in the program. The total budget for the 2019-20 DISD Needs program was \$6,891,216 from Title I funds, which was an increase from \$5,875,399 in 2018-19.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of ILCs in 2019-20?

During the 2019-20 school year, 68 ILCs worked in the Dallas ISD, which was an increase from 62 ILCs in 2018-19.³ The majority of 2019-20 ILCs were female (87%) and/or African American (59%). Most ILCs (75%) held a master's degree or doctorate. In addition, 77 percent of ILCs were retained as district ILCs from 2018-19 to 2019-20.

What was the distribution of ED and ILC campus visits by network during the 2019-20 school year?

During the 2019-20 school year, 3,142 ED/SL visits and 2,069 ILC visits were conducted on Dallas ISD campuses (Table 1). The largest percentage of visits occurred in the Southeast (ED/SL: 29.1%; ILC: 29.8%) and Southwest (ED/SL: 15.9%; ILC: 19.8%) networks, and the smallest percentage occurred in the Magnet (ED/SL: 0.6%; ILC: 0.8%) and Transformation (ED/SL: 1.8%; ILC: 1.0%) networks. ED spot observations were not reported in 2019-20 because of incomplete available data.⁴

¹ One Friday per month was spent with Teaching and Learning to increase depth of knowledge and to develop PD that ILCs used to train EDs, teachers, CICs, and APs. One Friday per month included coaching training from an outside vendor (Ed Elements) to build ILC coaching capacity. One or two Fridays per month were spent with SL to present ideas, address needs, and collaborate (i.e., sessions on reading, sound research-based practices, etc.)

² The last day of 2019-20 in-class instruction in the Dallas ISD was March 13, 2020. At-home learning began on March 23, 2020 after spring break.

³ The 10 ILCs that served Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) campuses or the Office of Racial Equity in 2019-20 were not included in this evaluation because they had different job responsibilities and were not required to attend the same meetings as other ILCs.

⁴ After reviewing the Campus Coaching Tracker file, the evaluator and SL staff members determined that the spot observation data were likely incomplete because some EDs used a different system for recording spot observations. EDs also may have calibrated with campus leaders during campus visits without submitting an ED spot observation.

Table 1: 2019-20 ED/SL and ILC Visits by Network

	ED/SL Visits		ILC Visits	
	N	%	N	%
ACE	362	11.5	22	1.1
Central	372	11.8	263	12.7
Magnet	19	0.6	16	0.8
Northeast	417	13.3	396	19.1
Northwest	499	15.9	327	15.8
Southeast	915	29.1	616	29.8
Southwest	501	15.9	409	19.8
Transformation	57	1.8	20	1.0
District	3,142	100.0	2,069	100.0

Source: Campus Coaching Tracker data files from SL dated 06/11/20.

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

What professional development opportunities were offered and completed by ILCs in 2019-20?

After reviewing the attendance data for ILC PD, the evaluator identified that attendance data for 15 PD sessions prior to March 13, 2020 were not available for analysis. The evaluator and SL program leadership determined that these data likely were missing for a variety of reasons, such as the COVID-19-related transition to at-home learning, inconsistent use of sign-in sheets at PD sessions, addition of PD sessions to the original calendar, and inconsistent use of sign-in sheets because of changes in times and dates of the sessions. Therefore, these results were not possible to include in this report.

What were the perceptions of EDs, ILCs, CICs, and APs regarding the implementation of the DISD Needs program in 2019-20?

Survey results presented in this section reflect major findings for the ED, ILC, CIC, and AP surveys. This section includes results related to experiences prior to and during COVID-19-related district at-home learning. Similar to 2018-19, survey responses regarding the DISD Needs program were generally positive.

Executive Director Survey

Of the 20 EDs invited to complete the survey, eight (40%) completed at least part of the survey. The three most common services that EDs assigned to their reading and mathematics ILCs included guiding, planning, and modeling support for PLCs (100%); leading PD sessions (100%); and reviewing and interpreting campus data (100%).

Prior to at-home learning, EDs highly rated the ILC model. All EDs reported that the reading and mathematics ILCs:

- provided above average or excellent services,
- frequently or almost always met the needs of their campuses prior to at-home learning, and
- provided extremely helpful support and content to leadership teams.

In addition, 100 percent of EDs who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that:

- the efforts of CICs in their networks contributed to the improvement of teacher performance,

- the ILC model strengthened the skills of administrative teams and CICs, and
- the ILC model was effective during the 2019-20 school year.

When describing two strengths of the 2019-20 ILC model (16 responses), EDs most frequently mentioned the content knowledge of the ILCs ($n = 5$; 31%), planning with ILCs ($n = 4$; 25%), and having the autonomy to meet the needs of their campuses ($n = 3$; 19%). Regarding the supports that would be beneficial for the ILC model for the 2020-21 school year (11 responses), EDs most often mentioned having additional resources (e.g., extra planning time and more ILCs; $n = 4$; 36%) and maintaining consistency with the ILC model ($n = 3$; 27%).

Once the district transitioned to at-home learning, 100 percent of EDs reported that:

- the quality of services provided by the reading and mathematics ILCs was above average or excellent,
- the support and content from the ILC model was moderately or extremely helpful to content leadership teams, and
- the ILC model was effective during at-home learning.

Regarding how the needs of their ILCs changed during at-home learning (6 responses), most respondents reported that the ILCs helped campuses transition to virtual content learning ($n = 4$; 67%) by providing professional development, resources and tools, technology lessons, and feedback on best instructional practices. When asked how the ILC model could be improved in possible future at-home learning situations (6 responses), EDs most often reported that ILCs should continue in their current roles ($n = 2$; 33%).

Instructional Lead Coach Survey

Of the 68 ILCs invited to complete the survey, 66 (97%) completed at least part of the survey. ILCs reported that the three most common services frequently or very frequently requested by EDs included guiding, planning, and modeling support for PLCs (95%); reviewing and interpreting campus data (95%); and helping to implement curriculum (94%).

The frequency with which ILCs reported providing services to CICs and APs was generally high, but somewhat varied depending on the support recipient.

- Guiding, planning, and modeling support for PLCs (CICs: 97%; APs: 88%) and working with campus administrators on instructional practices (CICs: 91%; APs: 77%) were two services that ILCs frequently (frequently or very frequently) provided to both CICs and APs.
- While 92% of ILCs reported frequently leading PD sessions for CICs, a smaller percentage of ILCs (63%) frequently led PD sessions for APs. In contrast, 85 percent of ILCs reported that they frequently reviewed and interpreted campus data for APs, compared to 49 percent of ILCs for CICs.

ILCs who completed the survey highly rated the helpfulness of the services that they received from the DISD Needs program. Seventy-seven percent of ILCs rated the PD collaboration with the Teaching and Learning department as helpful (moderately or extremely helpful), and 72 percent rated the Coaching Academies from Ed Elements as helpful. Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that the collaboration between Teaching and Learning and ILCs provided content resources that effectively helped campuses. In addition, all ILC survey respondents agreed that

- APs, CICs, and principals were receptive to the service(s) that they provided,
- the ILC model was effective, and
- the efforts of CICs contributed to the improvement of teacher performance during the 2019-20 school year.

Prior to at-home learning, the two areas that ILCs most frequently reported as working well were collaborating with other ILCs, EDs, CICs, and stakeholders (92%) and having the flexibility to provide support based on campus needs (89%). In addition, 64 percent of ILCs reported that developing knowledge and competency was an opportunity for growth as an ILC. When responding to an open-ended question regarding the most important ways that EDs could continue to support the role of ILCs (130 responses), ILCs most frequently referenced working collaboratively with EDs as a team ($n = 27$; 21%), followed by receiving feedback and coaching for growth ($n = 24$; 18%) and having autonomy and flexibility to support their campuses ($n = 14$; 11%).

Once the district transitioned to at-home learning, ILCs continued to report that working with campus administrators on instructional practices (CICs: 88%; APs: 72%) and guiding, planning, and modeling support for PLCs (CICs: 84%; APs: 78%) were the most common services provided to CICs and APs. Most ILCs (91%) also reported the ILC model was effective during at-home learning.

When ILCs described how their needs changed during at-home learning (58 responses), about half of respondents referred to the transition to a virtual environment for at-home learning and how they needed additional trainings to provide virtual campus support for technology and instruction ($n = 31$; 53%). The supports that ILCs most often cited as most successful during at-home learning (61 responses) were related to a combination of online support (e.g., technology training, PLC meetings, and professional development; $n = 36$; 59%) and developing at-home lesson plans ($n = 9$; 15%). When ILCs described the challenges that they faced during at-home learning that required additional support (30 responses), the most frequent responses were related to technology issues and learning new online platforms ($n = 7$; 23%).

Campus Instructional Coach Survey

Of the 349 CICs invited to complete the survey, 224 (64%) completed at least part of the survey. During 2019-20, 95 percent of CIC respondents reported that an ILC had provided services to them or their campuses, and 88 percent reported that their ILCs at least sometimes provided services to their campuses.

The most frequent service that ILCs provided CICs was the implementation of district curricula (69%). In addition, over half of CICs reported that ILCs:

- provided guiding, planning, and modeling support for PLCs (59%);
- led PD sessions (56%);
- reviewed/interpreted campus data (55%);
- developed instructional practices (54%);
- provided feedback on action plans (54%); and
- helped develop action plans (52%).

Regarding the CIC conferences,⁵ CICs generally expressed favorable views about the sessions they attended. High rates of participants highly rated the helpfulness (helpful or very helpful) of the choice sessions (81%), content sessions (79%), and network sessions (73%) at the CIC conferences. When describing how the CIC conferences could be improved (214 responses), the CICs most frequently mentioned that they wanted more options for choosing CIC Conference classes ($n = 12$; 6%), and to provide input on the session topics before the conferences ($n = 12$; 6%).

In addition, most CICs expressed favorable views about their experiences with the DISD Needs program.

- Ninety percent of CICs agreed that the ILC model was effective in 2019-20.
- Eighty percent were satisfied with the quality of feedback and support from their ILCs.
- Most CIC participants agreed that ILCs responded in a timely manner (93%) and met the needs of their campuses (91%).
- Seventy-five percent of CICs who completed the survey also reported that they were satisfied (very or completely satisfied) with the quality of PD prior to at-home learning and with their collaboration with school administrators.
- CIC respondents also reported that they experienced at least some improvement in their coaching (84%), data (80%), feedback (84%), and knowledge (87%) skills.

The pattern of rates at which CICs received the three most common services from ILCs during at-home learning remained similar to rates before the transition, including implementation of district curriculum (59%); guiding, planning, and modeling support for PLCs (57%); and leading PD sessions (47%).

⁵ At the CIC conferences, ILCs shared best practices from the Teaching and Learning department to help CICs improve content knowledge depth.

When CICs described how their needs changed during at-home learning (161 responses), they most frequently reported that they needed more assistance providing technology support for teachers ($n = 58$; 36%), and 12 percent responded that their needs did not change. In addition, CICs considered the most successful support received during at-home learning (166 responses) to be the feedback that ILCs provided ($n = 33$; 20%), followed by weekly meetings with ILCs ($n = 30$; 18%) and the technology support ILCs provided ($n = 15$; 9%). CICs also described some challenges during at-home learning that required additional support from ILCs (136 responses). While they most often explicitly reported that they did not require additional support ($n = 44$; 32%), 13 percent ($n = 18$) reported that they faced challenges regarding technology, needing online resources for at-home learning, or coaching teachers during at-home learning.

Assistant Principal Survey

Of the 115 APs invited to complete the survey, 51 (44%) completed at least part of the survey. Seventy-nine percent reported that their ILCs at least sometimes provided services to their campuses, whereas six percent reported that an ILC had never provided services on their campuses. Prior to at-home learning, the three most common services that ILCs provided to APs included:

- helping to implement district curricula (51%);
- working with campus administrators to develop instructional practices (49%); and
- reviewing and interpreting campus data (49%).

Regarding the quality of services provided by ILCs, a high percentage of AP respondents agreed that ILCs responded in a timely manner (84%) and provided services that met the needs of their campuses (80%) during 2019-20. When describing the skills that improved from the ILC model, AP respondents reported that they experienced at least some improvement on their coaching (66%), data (60%), feedback (66%) and knowledge (66%) skills.

While a smaller percentage of APs reported that they frequently received services from ILCs after the district transition to at-home learning (between 22% and 37%) compared to before the transition (between 45% and 51%), the most common services that ILCs provided APs during at-home learning included:

- helping to implement district curriculum (37%);
- guiding, planning, and modeling PLCs (35%);

- working with campus administrators to develop instructional practices (33%);
- leading PD sessions (33%); and
- providing feedback on action plans (33%).

When describing the supports from the ILCs that were most successful during at-home learning (32 responses), APs most often explicitly reported that they did not receive support from an ILC during at-home learning ($n = 12$; 38%), followed by receiving instructional support ($n = 6$; 19%) and PLC support ($n = 5$; 16%). APs also described the challenges that they faced during at-home learning that required additional support from their ILC (24 responses). Forty-six percent ($n = 11$) of APs explicitly reported that they did not require additional support, followed by 17 percent ($n = 4$) who reported that they faced challenges regarding online engagement strategies and instructional practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve tracking of ED spot observations and PD attendance data. Missing or incomplete data prevented the ED spot observations and PD attendance data from being evaluated in 2019-20. DISD Needs program staff members should determine how the Campus Coaching Tracker file and PD sign-in sheets can be used more effectively to track ED spot observations and PD attendance during the school year. These data could be invaluable for monitoring the impact of these supports over time.

Continue using ILCs in their current roles. In 2019-20, most EDs, ILCs, CICs, and APs had favorable views of the ILC model and reported that the ILC model was effective before and after the transition to at-home learning. Thus, ILCs should continue to focus on providing direct campus instructional support that empowers and builds capacity within CICs and APs.

Provide additional support for at-home learning. During at-home learning, both ILCs and CICs reported that they needed additional trainings to provide virtual technology support for campuses and teachers. Because of the uncertainty regarding the effect of COVID-19 on the upcoming 2020-21 school year, DISD Needs program leadership should evaluate the needs of EDs, ILCs, CICs, and APs to determine the additional resources and supports they need to effectively lead and coach in both face-to-face and online settings.

EA20-526-4

Mitch Barton, Ph.D., Evaluation Analyst II

©2020 Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD)

Mail a written request for permission to use or reproduce any part of this document to:

Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment; H. B. Bell School Support Center; 2909 Buckner Blvd.; Box10; Dallas, TX 75228

An electronic version of this report and full 2019-20 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.

For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.