

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public School Choice (PSC) is an initiative born out of the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) to help Dallas Independent School District (ISD) students find their “best-fit” school. Transformation, innovation, and innovation pilot schools were the focus of this evaluation. In 2019-20, the district operated 34 transformation and innovation (T & I) schools (10 transformation, 24 innovation), each with an anchor model and with no academic or parental admission requirements.¹ Transformation schools are new schools without traditional attendance zones, whereas innovation schools are existing schools and limited to students in the school’s attendance zone. The 2019-20 budget was \$5,639,500, an increase from \$4,775,402 in 2018-19.²

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose was to examine context, process, and outcomes related to student selection/socioeconomic diversity, school climate, and student outcome goals. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district transitioned to at-home learning on March 23, 2020 (following spring break). Spring districtwide surveys and most spring student assessments were canceled as a result. Context/process data included interviews, emails, internal documents, and web site review. Demographic, climate survey, enrollment, attendance, and assessment data were pulled from district files. Outcomes for reading and mathematics included fall *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)*. Frequency and crosstabs analyses were used. Findings should be viewed with caution due to the reduced evaluation scope³ and pandemic effects.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the context of the T & I schools?

2019-20 T & I Campuses

From 2018-19 to 2019-20, the number of campuses ($N=25$ to 34) and students ($N=13,505$ to 18,739) increased (Table 1). Most students (81%) attended an innovation school.

Table 1: 2019-20 Dallas ISD Transformation and Innovation Schools

T & I School	Anchor Model	Grades Served	Students <i>N</i>
Transformation Schools			
Hernandez	Montessori	PK-3	230
Houston	PL	PK-5	233
Solar Boys	STEAM	PK-3	305
Solar Girls	STEAM	PK-5	561
Mata	Montessori	PK-7	645
Ignite	PL	6-7	358
Hulcy	STEAM	6-8	519
CityLab	Urban Planning	9-11	203
IDEA	PL	9-12	286
New Tech	Technology & PBL	9-12	269
Total Transformation			3,609
Innovation Schools			
Alexander ¹	PL	4 & 5 (reading)	339
Botello	PL	PK-5	541
Chapel Hill	PL	PK-5	470
Cowart	PL	PK-5	585
De Zavala	Montessori	PK-6	479
Donald	Leadership	PK-5	403
Douglass ^{2,3}	STEM	PK-5	476
Geneva Heights	IB	PK-5	434
Gonzalez	PL	PK-5	625
Kleberg ¹	STEAM	PK-5 (core subjects)	775
Kramer	IB	PK-5	628
Lipscomb	IB	PK-5	462
Lowe	PL	PK-5	593
McNair	STEAM	PK-5	556
Preston Hollow	IB	PK-5	431
Reagan	STEAM	PK-5	309
Richardson ²	PL	4 (all subjects)	630
Rogers	PL	PK-5	502
Salazar	PL	PK-5	513
Weiss	Leadership	PK-5	528
Zaragoza	PL	PK-5	351
Franklin	IB	6-8	1,342
Marsh ³	PL	6-8	992
Adams, B	Leadership	9-12	2,166
Total Innovation			15,130
T & I Total			18,739

Source: Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic file, 10/28/19.

Note: ¹Innovation pilot schools in 2019-20. ²Innovation pilot schools in 2018-19 and 2019-20. ³Choice strategies were restricted at Douglass Elementary School (ES) and Marsh Middle School (MS) during 2019-20 due to subpar 2018-19 accountability results (“Focus” and “Developing” LAS ratings, respectively); numbers were included for informational purposes. All innovation pilot school students were included.

¹ Anchor models included International Baccalaureate (IB); Leadership; Montessori; personalized learning (PL); Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM); Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Technology and project-based learning (Technology & PBL), and urban planning, architecture, and community development (Urban Planning). Choice model strategies were restricted at Douglass and Marsh due to subpar 2018-19 Local Accountability System (LAS) results; these schools were not included in the outcome analyses. More information on LAS can be found here: <https://www.dallasisd.org/localaccountability>.

² This included \$5,168,756 in district funds and \$470,744 in Title II funds.

³ Some goals were modified to use available data and others were not measured. EOY data that could not be used included full-year attendance, districtwide spring climate surveys, *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* 3-8 and *STAAR End of Course (EOC)*. Fall rather than spring staff climate survey data were used. Attendance was limited to the first four six-week periods. Student achievement analyses were limited to fall ACP reading and mathematics.

Like the district, most Choice students were economically disadvantaged (83%) and Hispanic (73%); however, some differences were found when reviewed by campus type. The percentage of economically disadvantaged students was lower (69%) for transformation schools than for innovation schools (86%) and the district (84%); this was expected because the district has been working toward having 50/50 socioeconomic diversity at transformation schools except Hulcy and New Tech. Fewer Hispanic (60% vs. 76% vs. 70%, respectively) and more white students (12% vs. 5% vs. 5%, respectively) attended transformation schools than innovation schools and the district. In contrast, more African American students attended a transformation school (21%) when compared to innovation schools (16%), but the percentages of African American students were the same between transformation schools and the district (21%). Fewer English learners (32%) attended transformation than innovation (53%) and district (46%) schools. Percentages of special education students were similar for transformation, innovation, and district schools (range: 9 to 10%).

Spring 2020 School Selection Process for 2020-21

Like previous years, OTI oversaw the 2019-20 PSC school application and selection process for 2020-21 schools (PSC 6.0), and it remained competitive. A total of 26 proposals were submitted, and 13 were approved (two transformation, eight innovation, and three innovation pilot). One additional school (Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Arts Academy) was named a transformation school. There were more applications and campuses selected in PSC 6.0 than in PSC 1.0- 5.0.

School Location/Anchor Model Decision Processes

The district relies on market analyses, school mapping, and other applicable data when making decisions for new school locations to ensure students living within all areas of Dallas ISD have equitable access to choice options such as T & I schools, magnet schools, early college high schools, and career institutes. In 2019-20, the Demographic Studies department provided market analysis information to OTI staff members to help them make informed decisions for future school locations and anchor models. Profiles were developed for each high school (HS) feeder pattern attendance zone, which included current choice offerings, incoming applications by model, outgoing applications by model, enrollment trends, market share,⁴ and maps of nearby charter and private schools.

Innovation Engine and Middle School Redesign

OTI grant initiatives, new in 2019-20, included Innovation Engine and Middle School Redesign (MS Redesign). Both

were designed to provide \$50,000 to selected campuses for a year, to expand innovation across the district, to allow selected campuses to explore or implement innovation efforts while receiving OTI support, and to help selected campuses work toward formal innovation school status. Of the 20 Innovation Engine schools, three (Ireland ES, Marsalis ES, and Moreno ES) were selected to be innovation schools and two (Bowie ES and North Dallas HS) were chosen to be innovation pilot schools in 2020-21.⁵ Of the five MS Redesign schools, one (Quintanilla) was selected as an innovation school, and one (Hill) was selected as an innovation pilot school for 2020-21.⁶

Development of Implementation Continuums

OTI staff members developed implementation continuums during 2019-20 for use in 2020-21 specific to four anchor models; more continuums are planned. Campus leaders are to use the continuums to determine where the campus falls in meeting anchor model standards, to pinpoint areas for improvement, and to review growth over time.

COVID-19 Impact on the PSC Initiative

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and transition to at-home learning, OTI staff members reported four changes. First, the campus tours planned for the spring semester were cancelled. Second, the deadline was extended for parents to confirm an offered seat for 2020-21. Third, current choice schools and newly selected 2020-21 choice schools were unable to utilize their funding for conferences or hold in-person professional development. Fourth, in response to the delay in the start of the 2020-21 school year, OTI adjusted the timeline for the PSC 7.0 process.⁷ The new deadline to submit the Letter of Intent was September 25, 2020, with the final proposals due on January 18, 2021.

Were student selection and socioeconomic goals met for transformation schools?

Goal 1: 100 percent of 2019-20 transformation schools will be at least five percentage points more economically and racially diverse when compared to the district average.⁸

Goal 1 was met for all transformation schools combined and for all but two transformation schools.⁹ The percentage of economically disadvantaged students for transformation schools combined (69%) was 15 percentage points lower than for the district (84%). All transformation schools combined had fewer Hispanic (-10 ppts), more white (+7 ppts), and more other (+3 ppts) students than the district;

⁴ Market share analyses were based on 2018-19 district enrollment data, charter school data, and population data. Population estimates were based on census data. These numbers were used to determine the number of students in a district school and the number that were untapped (e.g., students attending charter schools, private schools, and so forth).

⁵They were selected during the PSC 2019-20 school selection process.

⁶They were selected during the PSC 2019-20 school selection process.

⁷ The timeline and application information can be found at <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/57277>.

⁸ For the economic diversity part of the goal, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students had to be 5 percentage points or lower than the district average (did not apply to Hulcy and New Tech). To meet the racial diversity goal, campuses needed to have a five percentage point difference (higher or lower) in at least one racial category.

⁹ All but Hernandez and Ignite.

the percentage of African American students was the same for all transformation students combined and the district.

Hernandez (85%) did not meet the economic diversity part of the goal (79% or lower) and Ignite did not meet the goal for racial diversity. Percentage point differences between Ignite and the district ranged from one (African American and other) to three ppts (Hispanic and white).

Goal 2: The number of students applying to a transformation school in spring 2020 will exceed the number of seats available overall and for each transformation campus.

Goal 2 was met for all transformation schools combined and for all 10 schools in the lottery process. Like previous years, the number of students applying to a transformation school in spring 2020 ($N=3,177$) exceeded the number of seats available ($N=1,523$), which indicated markedly more applications than seats available. Overall, the applicant-to-seat ratio was 2.1 applicants for each available seat. Solar Girls had the highest applicant-to-seat ratio (7.2:1), followed by Mata (4.1:1) and Solar Boys (2.8:1).

Goal 3: At least 25 percent of 2020-21 students selected in the spring 2020 lottery will be recapture¹⁰ students.

Goal 3 was met for all transformation schools combined. The overall percentage of recapture students enrolled in 2020-21 transformation schools (25%) was the same as the target percentage (25%) but lower than the percentage for 2019-20 (29%). This was somewhat expected due to COVID-19 concerns in fall 2020 and because the recapture percentage in fall 2019 was higher than anticipated. When reviewed by campus, Dr. MLK Arts had the highest recapture percentage (62%), followed by Solar Girls (52%), Houston (44%), and Solar Boys (43%).

Were T & I school climate goals met?¹¹

Goal 4: The percentage of positive responses on the District Campus Climate Survey for T & I schools will be at or above the district average.

Goal 4 was met on all six climate survey subscales for four¹² of the 10 transformation schools, 13¹³ of the 22 innovation schools, and for all T & I campuses combined. For all innovation schools combined, the goal was met for all subscales. As for all transformation schools combined, the goal was met on three subscales but not for the other three.

¹⁰ Recaptured students were calculated based on external seats and tuition-based PK seats (External Seats (K-11) + Tuition-Based PK Seats).

¹¹ Two additional goals were set but could not be assessed due to cancellation of the districtwide spring student and parent surveys. Goal 4 was modified to use fall campus climate survey data instead of spring data due to the cancellation of the spring campus survey.

¹² Hernandez Montessori, Solar Girls, Hulcy, and New Tech.

¹³ Botello, Chapel Hill, Cowart, De Zavala, Donald, Kleberg, Kramer, Lipscomb, Lowe, McNair, Reagan, Richardson, and Rogers.

¹⁴ One goal could not be assessed due to the cancellation of spring 2020 STAAR. Goals 5 and 6 were limited to attendance data through the first

The percentage of positive responses was higher for all innovation schools combined than for all transformation schools combined for five of the six subscales; the percentages were about the same for one.

Ten schools (four transformation and six innovation) had fewer than 70 percent positive responses on three or more scales. Climate responses were below 70 percent on at least five scales for two transformation (Ignite and Solar Boys) and two innovation schools (Alexander and Franklin). Ignite and Solar Boys also had decreases in positive responses by more than 20 percentage points (ppts) for all six subscales (range of decreases: -20 to -40).

Were T & I student outcome goals met?¹⁴

Goal 5: The 2019-20 attendance rates for students at T & I schools will be at or above the district average.

Goal 5 was met for nine¹⁵ of 10 transformation schools, 19¹⁶ of 22 innovation schools, and for all T & I schools combined; the goal was barely missed (within 0.2 ppts) for two of the 22 innovation schools. Two schools (one transformation and one innovation) had attendance rates below the district average (94.4%): City Lab (93.8%) and McNair (93.3%). Year-to-year attendance rates for students at T & I schools that were open in 2018-19 and 2019-20 as well as the district were about the same (96.3% and 96.2% for transformation, 95.7% and 95.2% for innovation, and 94.7% and 94.4% for district schools, respectively).

Goal 6: The 2019-20 chronic absenteeism rates¹⁷ for students at T & I schools will be at or below the district average.

Goal 6 was met for nine¹⁸ of 10 transformation schools, 20¹⁹ of 22 innovation schools, and for all T & I schools combined. Students at transformation (3.3%), innovation (5.7%), and all T & I schools (5.2%) had lower chronic absenteeism rates compared to the district (8.4%). Three schools (one transformation and two innovation schools) had higher chronic absenteeism rates than the district: City Lab (11.8%), McNair (9.0%), and B. Adams (10.3%).

Goal 7: The percentage of T & I school students that meet grade-level standards on student assessments will be at or above the district average.

Goal 7 was met for both of the fall 2019 ACPs (reading and mathematics) for five²⁰ of 10 transformation schools, 12²¹ of

four six weeks of the school year. Goal 7 was modified to use fall ACP data rather than TerraNova, SUPERA, STAAR 3-8, and STAAR EOC data.

¹⁵ All but City Lab.

¹⁶ All but Alexander, McNair, and B. Adams.

¹⁷ Students with 15 absences or more were identified as having chronic absenteeism.

¹⁸ All but City Lab.

¹⁹ All but McNair and B. Adams.

²⁰ Hernandez Montessori, Solar Boys, Solar Girls, Hulcy, and New Tech.

²¹ Botello, Chapel Hill, Donald, Geneva Heights, Gonzalez, Kramer, Lowe, Preston Hollow, Reagan, Richardson, Rogers, and Salazar.

22 innovation schools, and all T & I schools combined. Of the 10 transformation schools, seven met the goal for reading/language arts, and five met the goal for mathematics. As for the 22 innovation schools, 13 met the goal for reading/language arts, and 18 did so for mathematics.

One-year passing rate comparisons are provided for informational purposes only and should be viewed with caution.²² Year-to-year results varied when reviewed for individual campuses. In reading, the percentages of students passing decreased from fall 2018 to fall 2019 for eight of the nine transformation campuses and for eight of the 14 innovation campuses, stayed about the same for one of the nine transformation schools, and increased for six of the 14 innovation schools. As for mathematics, the passing percentages decreased for four of the nine transformation schools and eight of the 14 innovation schools, increased for five of the nine transformation schools and four of the 14 innovation schools, and stayed about the same for two of the 14 innovation schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue using market analysis data for determining future locations and instructional models for T & I schools. By using market analyses, school mapping and other applicable information, OTI staff members coordinated the expansion of T & I schools not only for the purpose of scaling the initiative but to also make decisions through an equity lens. The data-focused planning coupled with the rigorous selection process should be commended as the district continues to scale the initiative.

Keep the Innovation Engine and Middle School Redesign initiatives. The initiatives provided seed money to allow 25 campuses to explore and test out innovative ideas during 2019-20. The year of exploration allowed campuses to develop and/or attempt to replicate an innovative idea, test the idea out on a small-scale basis, and determine whether the innovation should be continued, expanded, and/or refined. First-year efforts were effective as seven of the 25 campuses were chosen during the spring 2020 school selection process (PSC 6.0) as innovation ($n=4$) or innovation pilot ($n=3$) campuses for 2020-21.

Ensure adequate support, campus use of OTI-developed implementation continuums, and systematic follow-up measures to target areas in need of improvement. The number of schools in operation was 25 in 2018-19, 34 in 2019-20, and will increase to 46 in 2020-21. As the district continues to scale the initiative, it will be important that adequate supports are in place to assist both new and existing campuses. Further, it will be imperative that campus leaders use OTI quality control continuums as expected, share results and actions based on continuum results with OTI staff members through an established system, and provide targeted support through training, coaching, and written expectations.

Create a system to place low-performing schools on probation and/or remove the Choice status. As an example, two schools (Douglass and Marsh) retained Choice status in 2019-20 but implementation of their anchor models was restricted due to subpar 2018-19 LAS ratings. Develop an annual or biannual system that begins after the second year of operation to assess whether a school should retain or lose Choice status or continue on probationary basis for one year. Include measures such as progress toward anchor model implementation, school climate, and student achievement. Consider automatic probation or removal guidelines for schools that earn a LAS rating of Developing or Focus.

Bolster support for schools that scored below the district average on three or more of the six staff climate survey subscales. Ten schools (four transformation and six innovation) had fewer than 70 percent positive rates on three or more subscales. Positive rates were below 70 percent on at least five subscales for two transformation (Ignite and Solar Boys) and two innovation schools (Alexander and Franklin), showing a need for overall school climate improvement. Solar Boys and Ignite had decreases in positive rates from fall 2018 to fall 2019 by more than 20 ppts for all six subscales (range of decreases: -20 to -40). One transformation school (City Lab) and two innovation schools (Geneva Heights and B. Adams) had fewer than 70 percent positive ratings on four of the six subscales.

REFERENCE

Sanguras, L.Y. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of Public School Choice. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

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²² Because ACPs are scaled yearly based upon the current year's results, readers should exercise caution when comparing year-to-year results.