

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) initiative was formed in 2015-16 on the principle that transforming schools requires strong leadership and effective teachers enveloped in an environment of high expectations for students and staff members. To accomplish this goal, the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) provided competitive stipends to incentivize top teachers and principals to relocate to some of the district's most challenged campuses.

In 2019-20, four of the six campuses from the second cohort (ACE 2.0; C.F. Carr, J.N. Ervin, Thomas J. Rusk, and Edward Titche) participated in their third year of the program. These campuses continued to receive competitive stipends to incentivize top teachers and principals to serve some of the district's most challenged campuses. In addition, seven campuses from the third cohort (ACE Leadership 3.0; Cesar Chavez, Paul L. Dunbar, L.L. Hotchkiss, Maple Lawn, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elisha M. Pease¹, and Joseph J. Rhoads) participated in their second year of the program. Leadership teams of 12 to 14 teachers at these campuses were offered stipends for an additional 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 district will expand the ACE program to 23 campuses including four campuses that participated in ACE 1.0². Beginning in 2020-21, the district will designate 80 campuses as High Priority Campus (HPC) with ACE campuses being identified as a subset of HPC campuses.

The ACE program goal was to improve student achievement by striving to accelerate learning through a focus on three general components: *People*, *Learning*, and *Expectations*. To support acceleration in the three areas, ACE campuses prioritized balanced literacy, social and emotional development, and professional learning communities (PLCs) with strong data practices.

To accelerate factors related to people, ACE campuses were staffed with strong administrators and effective teachers. The program goal was to recruit, retain, and develop strong teachers as measured by (1) a minimum of 60 percent of teachers on ACE campuses with Proficient I or above Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) effectiveness levels, (2) annual teacher retention rates at or above district retention rates, and (3) fourth or fifth quintile scores on the

Culture of Feedback and Support section of the district Climate Survey.

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. The program goal was to (1) improve rates of kindergarten to grade two students reading on grade level as measured by *Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)* (i.e., rates of Level 3 and above students at or above district rates)³, (2) close the achievement gap in assessment scores (i.e., within 10 percentage points of district rates on fall and spring *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)* and *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)*), and (3) close the achievement gap for reading and mathematics growth (i.e., within at least 10 percentage points of district rates of students with Expected and Accelerated ratings on *STAAR* reading and mathematics progress measures).

To accelerate factors related to expectations, ACE campuses emphasized relationships among campus community members. The program goal was to increase positive student expectations and parent engagement as measured by having (1) disciplinary offenses at or below the district average, (2) attendance rates at or above 96 percent, (3) Student Experience survey positive response rates at or above district averages, and (4) parent perception positive response rates at or above district averages.

On Friday March 13, 2020, in alignment with federal recommendations, the Governor of Texas issued a disaster proclamation certifying that the novel coronavirus COVID-19 posed an imminent threat of disaster for all counties in the state of Texas. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning on March 23 following spring break (March 16 – 20) until the end of the school year. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Texas Education Agency (TEA) cancelled *STAAR* administration for the 2019-20 school year. Additionally, the district cancelled the administration of local assessments and districtwide surveys including the spring Climate survey, Student Experience survey, Parent/Guardian survey, *ACPs*, and fifth and sixth six-week *ISIP*. The district also suspended normal collection of attendance and disciplinary data.

¹ In 2018-19, former ACE 1.0 campus Elisha M. Pease elementary school joined ACE Leadership 3.0.

² ACE 1.0 campuses participated in the ACE program from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

³ *ISIP* will no longer be administered in Dallas ISD after the 2019-20 school year.

Therefore, results presented in this report are from data available through the first four six weeks of the 2019-20 school year.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the source and amount of funding for the ACE program?

The total budget for the 2019-20 ACE program was \$8,090,320, which was a \$552,389 decrease from \$8,642,709 in 2018-19. This budget was supported by general operating funds from the Dallas ISD. The budget included \$6,727,199 for additional personnel and teacher stipends, \$181,964 for uniforms, and \$1,181,157 for professional development and extra duty pay.

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

Students

In 2019-20 there were a total of 6,422 ACE 2.0 (N=2,318) and ACE 3.0 (N=4,104) students compared to 6,394 in 2018-19 (ACE 2.0: N=2,221; ACE 3.0: N=4,173). Over half of 2019-20 students in ACE 2.0 and 3.0 campuses were male (52%) and a higher proportion were identified as economically disadvantaged (97%)(Table 1) compared to the district (84%). ACE 2.0 and 3.0 campuses also had a larger proportion of African American (52%) students compared to the district (21%) but had a smaller proportion of Hispanic (43%) students compared to the district (70%). ACE 2.0 and 3.0 campuses had a smaller proportion of students identified as English learners (ELs; 36%) compared to the district (46%), and had a similar proportion enrolled in special education (10%) compared to the district (9%).

Table 1: 2019-20 ACE Student Characteristics

	ACE 2.0 and 3.0 (N = 6,422)	
	N	%
Sex		
Male	3,312	51.6
Female	3,110	48.4
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	3,313	51.6
Hispanic	2,767	43.1
White	89	1.4
Other/Missing	253	3.9
Special Student Groups		
Econ. Disadvantaged	6,215	96.8
English learner	2,315	36.0
Special education	649	10.1

Source: District Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data dated 10/28/19.

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

Teachers

In 2019-20, the 393 teachers on ACE campuses were 77 percent female, 81 percent African American or Hispanic (48% and 33%, respectively), and 27 percent held at least a master's degree (Table 2). Over half of teachers (59%) earned a TEI effectiveness level of Proficient I or above, which was slightly lower than the program objective (60%). A higher rate of ACE 2.0 teachers (62%) than ACE Leadership 3.0 teachers (57%) had TEI effectiveness ratings of Proficient I or higher.

Table 2: 2019-20 ACE Teacher Characteristics

	ACE 2.0 and 3.0 (N = 393)	
	n	%
Sex		
Male	91	23.2
Female	302	76.8
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	189	48.1
Hispanic	128	32.6
White	67	17.0
Other/Missing	9	2.3
Highest Degree Earned		
Associate's	2	0.5
Bachelor's	261	66.4
Master's	103	26.2
Doctoral	4	1.0
Other/Missing	23	5.9
TEI Effectiveness Level		
Below Proficient I, No Level, or N/A	171	40.8
Proficient I, II, or III	217	51.8
Exemplary I or higher	31	7.4

Source: District personnel file dated 01/07/20 and teacher effectiveness level data file from the Dallas ISD Data Analytics and Control department dated 04/20/20.

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding. Total number of teachers for each ACE cohort may differ slightly from the total in the TEI effectiveness level section because the files were created on different days.

Principals

There were 11 ACE principals, with the majority identifying as female (64%), African American (64%), and Hispanic (27%). Most principals held at least a master's degree (82%). Assigned principals remained with their assigned ACE campus throughout the academic year.

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 was the same as the district rate (71%), while the ACE Leadership 3.0 teacher retention rate (72%) met the objective of exceeding the district rate.

Climate Survey

Due to the lack of spring 2020 Climate Survey data, the evaluator could not determine whether the program met its

end-of-year objective. Therefore, only descriptive results from the fall 2019 survey are presented in this report. In fall 2019, two out of four ACE 2.0 campuses (Carr and Titche) and four out of seven ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses (Chavez, Dunbar, Hotchkiss, and King) had scores in the fourth or fifth quintile (most positive) on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the climate survey, which was the same in spring 2019.

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

Due to the lack of fifth and sixth six-week *ISIP* data and spring 2020 *ACP* data, the evaluator could not determine whether the program met its end-of-year objectives for these metrics. Therefore, only descriptive results from the first four six weeks of *ISIP* data and the fall 2019 *ACP* data are presented in this report.

Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)

Overall, the percentages of ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 students who performed at grade level⁴ were mixed for all grades levels and showed no clear trends. Fourth six-week results showed that the rate of students reading on grade level at ACE 2.0 campuses exceeded district rates in grade one (45% vs 43%) and grade two (48% vs 47%). Fourth six-week results showed that the rate of students reading on grade level at ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses (range: 47% to 53%) exceeded district rates (range: 43% to 49%) for all three grade levels. ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses had a higher rate of kindergarten and grade one students reading on grade level (53% and 50%, respectively) than ACE 2.0 campuses (45%, for both grade levels).

Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)

The 2019-20 fall *ACP* passing rates for ACE 2.0 exceeded the previous year on 35 of the 46 (76%) fall exams. Passing rates for ACE Leadership 3.0 exceeded the previous year on 19 of the 24 (79%) fall exams. In addition, ACE 2.0 students met the objective of passing rates within 10 percentage points or exceeding district rates on 42 of 46 (91%) fall exams, and ACE Leadership 3.0 students met the objective on 21 of 24 (88%) fall exams. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the district cancelled the administration of the spring *ACPs*.

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

ACE program leadership designated disciplinary offenses, attendance rates, Student Experience Survey results, and Parent/Guardian survey results as metrics to evaluate the 2019-20 expectations component of ACE. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the district cancelled the 2020

spring administration of the Student Experience Survey and Parent/Guardian survey. Also due to the lack of fifth and sixth six-week discipline and attendance data, the evaluator could not determine whether the program met its end-of-year objectives for these metrics. Therefore, only descriptive results from the first four six weeks of discipline and attendance data are presented in this report.

Disciplinary Offenses

Through the first four six weeks of 2019-20, ACE 2.0 campuses had 159 total offenses, which was markedly less than the 263 total offenses at the ACE 2.0 comparison campuses. ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses had 83 total offenses, which was higher than the 62 total offenses at the ACE 3.0 comparison campuses.

Attendance Rates

Through the first four six weeks of 2019-20, ACE 2.0 and ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses had an average attendance rate of 95 percent. Through the first four six weeks, all ACE 2.0 campuses and six of the seven (86%) ACE Leadership 3.0 campuses exceeded the overall district attendance rate (94%).

What were the 2020 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. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, TEA cancelled *STAAR* administration and suspended calculation of accountability ratings for the 2019-20 school year. As a result, all districts and campuses received a 2020 State Accountability Rating of "Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster."

RECOMMENDATIONS

As recommended in previous years, 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).

Monitor the long-term sustainability of the ACE program. Beginning in 2020-21, the ACE program will expand from 11 campuses to 23 campuses (109% increase). Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, state monetary resources have been negatively impacted by a strained economic environment. Therefore, it will be important for district leadership and program managers to

⁴ In 2019, Istation moved from a three Tier system for identifying lower performing students to a five Level system. Level 1 is equivalent to Tier 3,

Level 2 is equivalent to Tier 2, and Level 3 and above is equivalent to Tier 1 (i.e. performing at grade level).

monitor current and future program funding sources to ensure program sustainability.

REFERENCES

Chawla, N. (2018). 2017-18 Student Experience Survey. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

Jimenez (2018). 2017-18 *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)*. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

Palladino, D. K. (2016). Updated: Evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) 2015-16. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

Palladino, D. K. (2017). 2016-17 Evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE). Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

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

Barton, M. & Rowles, S. P. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE). Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

Weir, D. (2018). 2017-18 Dallas ISD Climate Survey. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

EA20-601-4

Larry Featherston, 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.