2020-21 DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Evaluation of Transformation and Innovation Schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Public School Choice (PSC) is an initiative created and sustained by the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) to help all Dallas Independent School District (ISD) students find the school that best fits their interests, aspirations, and preferred learning styles. The PSC initiative included Transformation schools, Innovation schools, and Innovation pilot schools during the 2020-21 school year.[1] Transformation schools are new schools without traditional attendance zones; innovation schools are existing schools limited to students in the school's attendance zone; Innovation pilot schools are schools working toward Innovation school status, as designated by OTI.

In 2020-21, the district operated 12 Transformation, 29 Innovation schools, and four Innovation pilot schools. The 2020-21 budget was $6,126,178, an increase from $5,639,500 in 2019-20.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

This evaluation examined the characteristics and processes of Transformation and Innovation (T& I) schools and OTI's progress toward achieving its 2020-21 goals in three areas: (a) student selection and socioeconomic/racial diversity, (b) school climate, and (c) student outcomes.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the context of the T & I schools?

2020-21 T & I Campuses

From 2019-20 to 2020-21, the number of Transformation schools increased from 10 to 12, and the number of Innovation schools increased from 24 to 33. In 2020-21, 4,670 students attended a Transformation school, and the remaining 18,810 students attended an Innovation school.

School Selection Process

In 2020-21, OTI received 52 Letters of Intent and 31 formal proposals for the new cohort of T & I schools for the 2021-22 school year (PSC 7.0). Nineteen proposals were selected for the new cohort of PSC 7.0 schools (10 Transformation schools, five Innovation schools, and four Innovation pilot or redesign schools).

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 during the 2020-21 school year. First, campus tours, piloting of implementation continuums, and other activities were cancelled. Second, conferences and professional development activities were delivered online rather than in person. Third, internal deadlines for T & I school Letters of Intent, proposals, trainings, and Innovation Grants were extended. Lastly, the deadline for parents to confirm seats offered for 2021-22 was also extended.

What were the characteristics of students enrolled in T & I schools?

Similar to the district (51%), 49 percent of Transformation students and 52 percent of Innovation students were males. The percentage of Hispanic students who attended Transformation schools (58%) was lower than Innovation schools (78%), and more African American (24%) and White (11%) students attended Transformation schools than Innovation schools (14% and 4%, respectively). While fewer EL students attended Transformation schools (32%) than Innovation schools (53%) and the district (46%), the percentage of special education students was similar across Transformation (9%) and Innovation schools (11%). Lastly, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students was lower for Transformation schools (70%) than for Innovation schools (87%) and the district (85%).[2]

Retention of 2019-20 T & I Students

Of the 262 grade five students who attended a 2019-20 Transformation school, 14 percent left the district when transitioning to a middle school (Grade 6) in 2020-21, which was less than the district rate in 2020-21 (18%) and 2019-20 (19%). Of the 1,813 grade five students who attended a 2019-20 Innovation school, 18 percent left the district when transitioning to a middle school (Grade 6) in 2020-21, which was the same as the district rate in 2020-21 (18%) and less than the district rate in 2019-20 (19%). Likewise, of the 147 grade eight students who attended a 2019-20 Transformation school, 11 percent left the district when transitioning to a high school (Grade 9) in 2020-21, which was less than the district rate in 2020-21 (12%) and 2019-20 (14%). Of the 1,352 grade eight students who attended a 2019-20 Innovation school, 10 percent left the district when

[1] The core tenants of T & I schools included the following: (a) No academic or parental entry requirements, (b) all students participate in the schoolwide model, (c) the Dallas ISD specifies recruitment and enrollment guidelines that Choice Schools must follow, and (d) Choice Schools align the selected model with national best practices.

[2] This difference was expected because the district has been working toward 50/50 socioeconomic diversity at Transformation schools.

transitioning to a high school (Grade 9) in 2020-21, which was less than the district rate in 2020-21 (12%) and 2019-20 (14%).

What were the characteristics of staff members in the T & I schools?

Teacher Demographics

In 2020-21, there were 342 full-time teachers at Transformation schools and 1,289 full-time teachers at Innovation schools. Seventy-five percent of Transformation and 73 percent of Innovation teachers were females. Thirty-three percent of Transformation teachers were African American, and 41 percent of Innovation teachers were Hispanic. More than half of the Transformation (64%) and Innovation (53%) teachers had five years or less of teaching experience, whereas 21 percent of Transformation and 22 percent of Innovation teachers had between six and 10 years of teaching experience. Fifteen percent of Transformation and 25 percent of Innovation teachers had more than 10 years of teaching experience.

Principal/Assistant Principal Demographics

In 2020-21, there were 31 principals/assistant principals at Transformation schools and 81 principals/assistant principals at Innovation schools. Seventy-seven percent of Transformation and 74 percent of Innovation principals/assistant principals were females. Fifty-eight percent of Transformation principals/assistant principals were African American, and 44 percent of Innovation principals/assistant principals were Hispanic. Thirty-nine percent of Transformation and 20 percent of Innovation principals/assistant principals had five years or less of creditable years of service, whereas 16 percent of Transformation and 30 percent of Innovation principals/assistant principals had between six and 10 years of creditable years of service. Nearly half of (45%) Transformation and over half of Innovation (51%) Innovation principals/assistant principals had more than 10 years of creditable years of service.

Teacher Retention Rates

Teacher retention rates from 2019-20 to 2020-21 (stayers) for Transformation schools and the district overall (77%) was slightly lower than Innovation schools (80%). In addition, the percentage of teachers at Transformation schools (8%) and Innovation schools (7%) who moved campuses was slightly lower than the district overall (9%). Lastly, the percentage of teachers at Transformation schools who left the district (15%) was slightly higher than Innovation schools (13%) and the district overall (14%).

Were student selection and diversity goals met for transformation schools?

Goal 1: The percentage of economically disadvantaged students at Transformation campuses will be at least five percentage points lower than the district average (i.e., more diverse).

- Goal 1 was met for eight of 10 (80%) Transformation schools that were included in the socioeconomic diversity goal and for all Transformation schools combined.

Goal 2: The percentage of students at Transformation campuses will be at least five-percentage points different (higher or lower) than the district average in one or more racial categories (i.e., more diverse).

- Goal 2 was met for all 12 Transformation schools and for all Transformation schools combined.

Goal 3: The number of students applying to a transformation school in spring 2021 will exceed the number of seats available overall and for each transformation campus.

- Goal 3 was met for 13 of 15 (87%) Transformation schools that were open during the 2021-22 school year and for all Transformation schools combined.

Goal 4: At least 25 percent of 2021-22 students selected in the spring 2021 lottery will be recapture students.[3]

- Goal 4 was met for all Transformation schools combined. The overall percentage of recapture students enrolled in 2021-22 Transformation schools was 31 percent.

Were T & I school climate goals met?

Goal 5: The percentage of positive responses on the district Campus Climate Survey for T & I schools will be at or above the district average.

- Goal 5 was met for all six climate survey subscales at five of 12 (42%) Transformation schools and 14 of 33 (42%) Innovation schools.

- Transformation schools combined met the goal for five subscales, and Innovation schools combined met the goal for four subscales. Fifteen schools (six Transformation and nine Innovation) had fewer than 70 percent positive responses on three or more subscales.

Goal 6: The percentage of positive responses on the district Student Experience Survey for T & I schools will be at or above the district average.[4]

- Goal 6 was met for all five student experience survey subscales at one of seven (14%) Transformation schools and eight of 27 (30%) Innovation schools (grades 3 to 5).

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

[4]. Campuses were only included in analyses if their participation rates were 52 percent or greater. Results should not be compared to prior years and should be reviewed with caution.

- Goal 6 was met for all five student experience survey subscales at two of the seven (29%) Transformation schools and two of the seven (29%) Innovation schools (grades 6 to 12).

Goal 7: The percentage of positive responses on the district Parent/Guardian Survey for T & I schools will be at or above the district average.

- Goal 7 was met for the District Parent/Guardian survey at three of eight (38%) Transformation schools and 16 of 22 (73%) Innovation schools that were included.
- Overall, Transformation schools (85%), Innovation schools (88%) and the district (86%) performed similarly.

Were T & I student outcome goals met?

Attendance and Chronic Absenteeism[5]

Goal 8: The 2020-21 attendance rates for students at T & I schools will be at or above the district average.

- Goal 8 was met for nine of 12 (75%) Transformation schools and 28 of 33 (85%) Innovation schools. Attendance rates for Transformation schools (96%) and Innovation schools (94%) were slightly higher than the district (93%).

Goal 9: The 2019-20 chronic absenteeism rates[6] for students at T & I schools will be at or below the district average.

- Goal 9 was met for eight of 12 (67%) Transformation schools and 27 of 33 (82%) Innovation schools. Chronic absenteeism rates for Transformation schools (13%) and Innovation schools (19%) were lower than the district (23%) in 2020-21.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Growth

Goal 10: The percentage of T & I school students that meet grade-level standards on student assessments will be at or above the district average.

RIT scores: Gains from BOY to EOY will be at or above the district average.

- For English reading, the goal was met for eight of 12 (67%) Transformation schools and for 27 of 33 (82%) Innovation schools.
- For Spanish reading, the goal was met for three of eight (38%) Transformation schools and 12 of 27 (44%) of the Innovation schools.
- For mathematics, the goal was met for eight of 12 (67%) Transformation schools and 24 of 33 (73%) Innovation schools.

CGP scores: High average or high growth from BOY to EOY will be at or above the district rate.

- For English reading, the goal was met at nine of 12 (75%) Transformation schools and 25 of 33 (76%) Innovation schools.
- For mathematics, the goal was met for eight of 12 (67%) Transformation schools and 26 of 33 (79%) Innovation schools.

RIT score thresholds: Rate above the 40th percentile for Spanish reading at EOY will be at or above the district rate.

- For Spanish reading, the goal was met at four of seven (57%) Transformation schools and nine of 27 (33%) Innovation schools.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)[7]

Goal 10: The percentage of T & I school students that meet grade-level standards on student assessments will be at or above the district average.

STAAR 3-8: Rate at the Approaches+ performance standards will exceed the district rate.

- For mathematics, the goal was met for four of eight (50%) Transformation schools and 20 of 31 (65%) Innovation schools. For reading, the goal was met for seven of eight (88%) Transformation schools and 18 of 31 (58%) Innovation schools. For writing, the goal was met for five of eight (63%) Transformation schools and nine of 31 (29%) Innovation schools. For science, the goal was met for five of the six (83%) Transformation schools and 20 of 31 (65%) of the Innovation schools. For social studies, the goal was met for none of the three Transformation schools and one of the four (25%) Innovation schools.
- Transformation schools met the Approaches+ performance standard for mathematics (62%), reading (70%), writing (54%), and science (67%) at a higher rate than the district and Innovation schools. Innovation schools met the Approaches+ (58%) performance standards for mathematics at the same rate as the district.

STAAR EOCs: Rate at the Approaches+ performance standards will exceed the district rate.

[5] Because of the challenges with collecting attendance data across multiple learning settings in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings in this section should be interpreted with caution and should not be compared to previous years.

[6] Students with 15 absences or more were identified as having chronic absenteeism.

[7] Because students could opt-out of *STAAR* or did not attend in-person school regularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some campuses had low participation rates for *STAAR* in 2020-21. Thus, the results from this section should be viewed with caution and should not be compared to previous years.

- For Algebra I, the goal was met for all six Transformation schools and five of the six (83%) Innovation schools. For English I, the goal was met for two of the three (67%) Transformation schools and one of the two (50%) Innovation schools. For English II, Biology, and U.S. History, the goal was met for all three Transformation schools and one of the two (50%) Innovation schools.

- Transformation schools met the Approaches+ performance standard for Algebra I (82%), English I (85%), English II (68%), Biology (73%), and U.S. History (89%) at a higher rate than the district and Innovation schools. Innovation schools met the Approaches+ (58%) performance standards for Algebra I (77%), English I (76%), English II (54%), Biology (60%), and U.S. History (84%) at a higher rate than the district.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue using market analysis to determine future locations and instructional models for T & I schools. By using market analyses, school mapping and other applicable information, OTI staff coordinated the expansion of T & I schools to ensure that students living within all areas of Dallas ISD had equitable access to school choice options. The data-focused planning and rigorous selection process should be commended as the initiative continues to expand.

Continue using the Innovation Engine and Middle School Redesign initiatives to produce high-quality PSC proposals. In 2020-21, the initiatives provided seed money for 21 campuses to implement innovative ideas on each campus. These initiatives provided each school with a year to plan, explore, and find the best-fit model for the school community. In 2020-21, seven schools from the Innovation Engine and Middle School Redesign initiatives developed high-quality PSC proposals that were chosen for the upcoming PSC 7.0 cohort as either Innovation Schools ($n = 5$) or Innovation pilot schools ($n = 2$). OTI staff members should continue using the Innovation Engine and Middle School Redesign initiatives to help more campuses produce high-quality PSC proposals.

Ensure adequate supports are available for schools as the district continues to scale the PSC initiative. Because the number of PSC schools was 25 in 2018-19 and will increase to 61 in 2021-22, it will be important that adequate supports are in place to assist both new and existing campuses as the district continues to scale the initiative. For example, while the implementation continuums were unavailable in 2020-21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, OTI staff members should continue developing these fidelity measures to ensure schools are consistently implementing their anchor model and to provide campuses with targeted support through training, coaching, and written expectations.

Continue striving for a socioeconomically and racially diverse student body at Transformation schools. While most Transformation schools were still working towards a 50/50 socioeconomic school model, almost all Transformation schools met the goal of being more socioeconomically and racially diverse than the district in 2020-21. To recruit more students and move closer to a 50/50 socioeconomic model, OTI staff members should continue working towards having more students apply to Transformation schools than seats available and recapturing students who live within district boundaries but attend non-district schools.

Determine how PSC schools should be evaluated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2020-21 school year, all Dallas ISD schools faced the challenge of providing synchronous and asynchronous learning activities for students in virtual and in-person settings. Because the pandemic potentially impacted the results of district surveys and student assessments in 2020-21, OTI program staff members should consider what outcome measures are appropriate for assessing the performance of PSC schools in 2021-22, especially due to the lack of Local Accountability System ratings as a result of COVID-19. If a PSC school receives a probation or loses Choice status, OTI program staff members may also need to determine what measures will be used to track progress over time.

Bolster support for schools that scored below the district average on three or more of the six Climate Survey subscales. Fifteen schools (six Transformation and nine Innovation) had fewer than 70 percent positive rates on three or more Climate Survey subscales. Positive rates were below 70 percent on at least five subscales for three Transformation schools (Downtown Montessori, Ignite, and IDEA) and six innovation schools (Geneva Heights, Franklin, Marsh, Quintanilla, Adams, and North Dallas). In addition, one Transformation school (Houston) and three Innovation schools (Alexander, Gonzalez, and Hill) had fewer than 70 percent positive ratings on four of the six subscales. Because these results were likely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, there might be a need for overall school climate improvement at some campuses.

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