

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) is a Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) initiative started in 2014-15 that replaced the previous tenure-based compensation system with an integrated system that defines, supports, and rewards teacher excellence.

In 2021-22, TEI was funded by General Operating funds, which included an administrative budget of \$550,000; a teacher benefits budget of \$45,022,434; and a TEI Expert Stipend cost of \$350,000. The total budget for the Digital Learning Mentoring and Support ESSER activity in 2021-22 was \$60,000.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS (EQs)¹

EQ1: What were the characteristics of teachers evaluated under TEI?

A total of 9,226 teachers received TEI Scorecards for the 2021-22 school year. Most teachers were either Hispanic or African American (69%) and female (69%). Twenty-two percent had earned at least a master's degree when they were hired. Teacher creditable years of service in the Dallas ISD ranged from zero (first-year teachers) to 55 years (mean = 10.0; median = 7.0).

EQ2: What were the results of the teacher performance component of defining excellence?

Spot Observations

- Spot observation scores statistically and practically improved from the beginning to the end of the 2021-22 academic year for all seven indicators.

Summative Appraisal

- The mean summative appraisal score of 79.7, indicated that teachers were performing better on average than Proficient across the summative appraisal rubric.
 - Average summative appraisal scores for first-year teachers (65.5) were significantly lower than teachers with more creditable years of service. Scores plateaued between six and seven creditable years of service (82.6).

Relationship Between Spot Observation and Summative Appraisal Scores

- Summative appraisal scores were highly correlated with Spot observation indicator scores ($r = .67$ to $.73$), indicating that summative scores were generally aligned with classroom observations.

EQ3: What were the results of the student achievement component of defining excellence?

Total Student Achievement

- While more creditable years of service did not necessarily result in higher total student achievement scores, first-year teachers earned the lowest average total student achievement scores.

Student Learning Objective (SLO) Points

- Most TEI-eligible teachers (93%) received SLO points, and 78 percent received the maximum (five points).
- The percentage of teachers who received zero SLO points increased from 2018-19 (0%) to 2021-22 (7%).²

Correlation among Student Achievement Measures

- For Category A and B teachers, teacher-level student achievement was moderately correlated with base school STAAR³ ($r = .26$ to $.45$) and weakly correlated with SLO points ($\rho = .18$ to $.23$).

EQ4: What were the results of the student experience component of defining excellence?

- Most student experience survey responses for elementary core (83%), elementary non-core (78%), middle school (69%), and high school (74%) teachers were positive.
- First-year teachers (73%) and teachers with at least 26 creditable years of service (72%) had the lowest percentage of positive responses on the student experience survey.

¹ Trends from 2018-19 and 2021-22 for the TEI results can be found in the full report (Avila, 2022).

² This was likely due to a change in TEI policy that indicated teachers who took no action on their SLO goal no longer received any points.

³ Base school STAAR refers to the school-level measure for student achievement.

EQ5: What were the correlations among the defining excellence components?

- In 2021-22, teachers with (a) higher summative appraisal scores tended to have higher total student achievement scores; (b) higher percentage of positive responses on the student survey tended to have slightly higher total student achievement scores, and (c) higher summative appraisal scores tended to have a higher percentage of positive responses on the student survey.

EQ6: What were the results of the Distinguished Teacher Review Process?

- In 2021-22, 2,512 teachers received DTR points, which was 27 percent of all district teachers.
- The percentage of DTR teachers was highest for teachers between eight and 10 years of service (17%) and between 14 and 18 years of service (20%).

EQ7: What were the results of the rewarding excellence (compensation) system of TEI?

Evaluation Scores, Evaluation Ratings, and Effectiveness Levels

- While first-year teachers earned the lowest average evaluation score (62.0), the score gradually increased and remained consistent between six and seven creditable years of service (78.9).
- The largest percentage of teachers received an effectiveness level of Proficient I (37%).

Salary Increases

- Only teachers who received an effectiveness level of Progressing I and above received a salary increase from 2021-22 to 2022-23.
- Teachers who received higher effectiveness levels in 2021-22 received higher salary increases for 2022-23 as compared to those with lower effectiveness levels.

EQ8: What were the retention rates for teachers?

- In 2018-19 and 2021-22, teachers with an effectiveness level below Proficient I left the district at higher rates than those at higher levels, indicating Dallas ISD retained effective teachers at higher rates than less effective teachers.
- Overall, the rate of teachers who left the district remained steady from 2018-19 (13%) to 2021-22 (14%).

EQ9: What were the results of TEI by network?

- In 2021-22, the district average summative appraisal score was 79.7, ranging by network from 77.4 (Southeast) to 85.9 (Magnet).
- The district average base school STAAR points received was 2.7, ranging from 2.1 (Southeast) to 3.9 (Magnet).
- The district average for student experience points was 9.5, ranging from 8.3 (Transformation & Innovation) to 11.2 (Magnet).
- The percentage of teachers achieving DTR was 28.3 percent, ranging from 20.1 percent (Central) to 54.8 percent (Magnet).

EQ10: What were the results of TEI by teacher groups?⁴

Teacher Retention

- Teachers who continued in the district and who moved to a non-teaching position generally had higher TEI scores than teachers who left the district.

Teacher Type

- First-year teachers, strategic pipeline teachers, and teachers with effectiveness levels below Proficient I had TEI scores below the district averages.

Specialty Campuses

- Teachers at choice and magnet campuses had higher TEI scores than the district for all categories.

Campus Characteristics

- Teachers at campuses with majority White students (N = 4) had higher TEI scores than teachers at campuses with majority Hispanic students (N = 190), teachers at campuses with majority African American students (N = 35), and the district across all categories.
- TEI scores of teachers at campuses with majority Hispanic students were nearly identical to district averages, and teachers at campuses with majority African American students scored within two points of the district average on their summative appraisal scores, student achievement scores, and student experience points.

School Level

- Teachers who taught at the elementary and high school level generally had TEI scores at or above the district

⁴ In this section, TEI scores include mean summative appraisal score, mean total student achievement score, mean student experience score,

and mean percentage of teachers receiving an evaluation rating of Proficient I or higher.

average. Middle school teachers scored below the district average across all categories.

EQ11: What were the teacher and administrator experiences with TEI?⁵

To collect feedback regarding experiences with TEI, online surveys were administered to Dallas ISD teachers and administrators who participated in the TEI evaluation system during the 2021-22 academic year. Of the teachers and administrators surveyed, 3,712 teachers (47%) and 349 administrators (57%) at least partially completed the survey.

TEI Knowledge, Overall Satisfaction, and Perception of Fairness

- Most teachers (73%) and almost all administrators (97%) reported at least intermediate TEI knowledge.
- A higher rate of administrators (76%) and teachers with higher effectiveness levels (53%) expressed high satisfaction (satisfied or very satisfied) with TEI than teachers with lower effectiveness levels (29%).
- A higher rate of administrators (76%) than teachers (44%) rated TEI as at least somewhat fair.
 - Additionally, teachers with effectiveness levels of Proficient II or higher (54%) perceived TEI as at least somewhat fair at a higher rate than teachers with the lowest effectiveness levels (39%).
- Administrators (60%) and teachers (53%) most frequently reported that challenges facing lower performing schools compared to higher performing schools was the reason for perceived TEI unfairness.

Defining Excellence

Spot Observations, Extended Observations, and Summative Appraisals

- The rate of administrators who reported that they had conducted summative evaluations for staff members with whom they had worked for an insufficient amount of time was higher in 2021-22 (23%) compared to 2017-18 (17%).
 - The percentage of administrator respondents who at least sometimes felt pressure to inflate teacher observation scores was also higher in 2021-22 (26%) compared to 2017-18 (22%).
- Administrators rated spot observations (98%), extended observations (97%), and summative appraisals (95%) as more helpful than teachers overall (72% for each evaluation activity), which was a similar pattern as teachers with higher effectiveness levels (78% to 80%). The rate of administrators (93%) and teachers

with higher effectiveness levels (77%) who rated summative appraisal feedback and spot observation feedback as aligned or very aligned exceeded the overall teacher rate (65%).

Student Experience Survey

- In 2021-22, higher rates of administrators (70%) than teachers (52%) rated Student Experience Survey feedback as helpful to teachers.

Supporting Excellence

- Approximately half of teachers agreed that the 2021-22 district-sponsored (50%) and campus-sponsored (53%) professional development opportunities offered applicable strategies they were using in the classroom and were aligned with their professional development plans (49% to 51%).
- While teachers with higher effectiveness levels were more likely to agree that campus-level professional development was applicable (80%) and aligned (77%) than other teachers (46% to 52%), perceived helpfulness did not differ by effectiveness level group (64% to 66%).
- A higher rate of administrators (64% to 97%) and Proficient II and higher teachers (58% to 84%) reported campus professional development was aligned with student achievement data, TEI spot observation data, and Student Experience Survey data than teachers with the lowest effectiveness levels (56% to 78%).
- Both administrators and teachers agreed that classroom management was in the top three most needed topics of additional professional development.

Rewarding Excellence

- Administrators (64%) were more likely than teachers (43%) to agree or strongly agree that the district should differentiate teacher salary by effectiveness level.
- Administrators were more likely than teachers to agree that the TEI compensation system (a) supports the recruitment and retention of teachers, (b) differentiates salaries to reward teachers who perform well, (c) will positively affect the future of Dallas ISD teachers, and (d) will result in teachers making more money over time than the old system.

EQ12: What were the outcomes related to the ESSER funded Digital Learning Mentoring and Support activity?

⁵ Trends from 2017-18 and 2021-22 on the TEI teacher and administrator survey can be found in the full report (Avila, 2022).

- Sixty-six percent of new teachers attended at least one Professional & Digital Learning (PDL) training, which met the program goal of 50%.
- However, only 68% of attendees provided feedback, which did not meet the goal of 90%.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue efforts to determine how the TEI system should be adapted based on lasting programmatic changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the TEI system was not implemented in 2019-20 or 2020-21. During this time, TEI program staff revised how teacher performance would be evaluated and supported in 2021-22. For example, observations were completed in-person or virtual, MAP Growth was used for baseline assessments, teachers who took no action on their SLO goal did not receive any points, and the requirements for spot observations and professional development were standardized across all teachers. Even though a slightly higher percentage of administrators reported that they felt pressure to inflate scores than previous years, overall summative appraisal scores and evaluation scores remained relatively consistent from 2018-19 to 2021-22. This indicated that overall TEI scores remained relatively stable after the programmatic changes and that administrators may be better prepared to handle pressure to inflate scores. Moving forward, TEI program staff members should continue assessing how changes that were made in response to the COVID-19 pandemic impact the ability of the TEI system to identify effective teachers.

Continue efforts to compensate teachers based on classroom effectiveness rather than a traditional tenure-based compensation system. A higher rate of low performing teachers left the district compared to higher performing teachers in 2018-19 and 2021-22. While the rate of teachers with an Unsatisfactory effectiveness level who left the district increased by nine percentage points from 2018-19 to 2021-22, the overall percentage of teachers who left the Dallas ISD has remained relatively consistent (13%

to 14%). This indicated that less effective teachers continued to leave the Dallas ISD at higher rates than effective teachers. In addition, creditable years of service was not associated with higher scores on summative performance evaluation scores, total student achievement scores, rates of positive responses on the student survey, or evaluation scores in 2018-19 and 2021-22.

Continue to focus on expanding and adapting professional development opportunities for teachers. While both teachers and administrators agreed that classroom management was in the top three most needed topics of additional professional development opportunities, the professional development topics requested by teachers differed by effectiveness level. For example, teachers at lower effectiveness levels tended to choose sessions related to student achievement data, TEI spot observation data, and Student Experience Survey, whereas teachers at higher effectiveness levels requested sessions related to distinguished teacher review. A continued focus on differentiated PD could help address the different topics requested by teachers based on their effectiveness level. In addition, the rate of teachers and administrators who reported that district virtual PDL training sessions were helpful or very helpful trended upward from 2017-18 to 2021-22. Addressing the professional development needs of teachers by effectiveness level and considering the modality of training could improve perceived helpfulness of PD opportunities and provide opportunities for professional growth.

Continue efforts to improve administrator and teacher perceptions that salaries based on effectiveness levels (a) adequately recognize their efforts to increase student achievement and (b) encourage them to stay in campus-based positions. From 2017-18 to 2021-22, less than half of administrators (49% to 48%) and less than a third of teachers (28% to 30%) responded positively to these items. Agreement with both statements also differed by effectiveness level. Teachers at higher effectiveness levels responded more favorably to statements than teachers at lower effectiveness levels. Improving administrator and teacher agreement with both items could improve teacher perceptions of TEI and bolster acceptance of the system.

EA21-539-4

Denisse Avila, M.Ed., Evaluation Analyst I

©2023 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 2021-22 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.

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