

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE) initiative was formed in 2015-16 with the goal to transform schools through 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 (ISD) provided competitive stipends to incentivize top teachers and principals to relocate to some of the district's most challenged campuses.

In 2020-21, all ACE campuses were identified as part of the 80 High Priority Campuses (HPC). The district expanded the ACE program to 23 campuses including:

- ACE 1.0 - Anne Webb Blanton, Billy Earl Dade, Umphrey Lee, and Sarah Zumwalt
- ACE 2.0 - C.F. Carr, J.N. Ervin, Thomas J. Rusk, and Edward Titche (Campuses participated in their fifth year of the program)
- ACE 3.0 - Cesar Chavez, Paul L. Dunbar, L.L. Hotchkiss, Maple Lawn, Martin Luther King, Jr., Elisha M. Pease, and H.S. Thompson¹ (Campuses participated in their fourth year of the program)
- ACE 4.0; John Neely Bryan, Rufus C. Burleson, Cedar Crest, Nancy J. Cochran, Frederick Douglass, Eddie Bernice Johnson, George W. Truett, and Wilmer-Hutchins Elementary (Campuses participated in their second year of the program)

All ACE campuses implemented the same ACE program model beginning in 2020-21. Leadership teams of 12 to 14 teachers at these campuses were offered stipends for 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 ACE program aimed 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:

- Improve rates of kindergarten to grade eight students reading and mathematics on grade level as measured by *NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)*; i.e., rates of Average Quintile and above students at or above district rates);
- close the achievement gap in assessment scores (i.e., within ten percentage points of district rates on fall and spring *Assessments of Course Performance (ACPs)* and *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)*; and
- close the achievement gap for reading and mathematics growth (i.e., within at least ten 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.

During the 2019-20 school year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning on March 23 until the end of the school year. In 2020-21, Dallas ISD delayed the start of the school year until September 8, 2020 and implemented at home learning districtwide for the first four weeks.

In 2021-22, the district returned to in-person instruction for all students, with minimal exceptions. The district offered virtual learning to a small subset of students who met district eligibility requirements. To help mitigate learning loss and further support students, the district offered three different

¹ In 2021-22, J.J. Rhoads became exclusively a PK learning center. Students in grades K through grade 5 as well as ACE funding moved to the

new H.S. Thompson Elementary School. Therefore, Rhoads PK will be excluded from analyses.

school calendars in 2021-22 (School-Day Redesign, Intersession, and Base/Traditional) and other supports.²

Of the ACE campuses, five adopted the Intersession school calendar (Bryan, Ervin, Pease, Truett, and WH-ES) and two adopted the Redesign school calendar (Maple Lawn and Rusk). Because of these variations in instructional time, and support activities, all results should be reviewed with caution.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

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

- The total budget for the 2021-22 ACE program was \$18,926,142 funded through district general operating funds.
- The budget included \$15,675,518 for additional personnel and teacher stipends, \$342,480 for uniforms, and \$2,908,144 for professional development and extra duty pay.

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

Students

- In 2021-22, there were a total of 11,839 students at ACE campuses compared to 11,967 in 2020-21 (Table 1).
- A higher proportion of students at ACE campuses were identified as economically disadvantaged (96%) compared to the district (84%).
- ACE campuses had a larger proportion of African American (47%) students compared to the district (21%) but had a smaller proportion of Hispanic (49%) students compared to the district (71%). ACE campuses had a smaller proportion of students identified as Emergent Bilingual (EBs; 39%) compared to the district (48%).

Teachers

Characteristics for the 803 teachers on ACE campuses were similar to the overall district in 2021-22, except there was a higher proportion of teachers at ACE campuses who were female (78.7%) and African American (51.7%) compared to the overall district (69.6% and 35.3%, respectively) and a lower proportion of teachers who were white (1.6% vs 4.2%) (Table 2).

Table 1: 2021-22 ACE Student Characteristics

	ACE Overall (N = 11,839)	
	N	%
Sex		
Male	6,078	51.3
Female	5,761	48.7
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	5,548	46.9
Hispanic	5,748	48.6
White	169	1.4
Other/Missing	374	3.2
Special Student Groups		
Econ. Dis.	11,325	95.7
Emergent Bilingual	4,584	38.7
Special Education	1,191	10.1

Source: District Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) demographic data dated 11/01/21.

Note: Econ. Dis. = Economically disadvantaged.

Table 2: 2021-22 ACE Teacher Characteristics

	ACE Overall (N = 803)	
	N	%
Sex		
Male	171	21.3
Female	632	78.7
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	415	51.7
Hispanic	260	32.4
White	115	14.3
Other/Missing	13	1.6
Highest Degree Earned*		
Associate's	6	0.7
Bachelor's	527	65.6
Master's	187	23.3
Doctoral	10	1.2
Other/Missing	73	9.1

Source: District personnel file dated 11/11/21 and teacher effectiveness level data file from the Dallas ISD Data Analytics and Control department dated 11/19/21.

Note: * = Highest degree earned at the time of hire. Totals include teachers and instructional leads. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Principals

There were 22 ACE principals with the majority identifying as female (64%), African American (59%), and Hispanic (32%). Most principals held at least a master's degree at the time of hire (82%). Assigned principals remained with their assigned ACE campus throughout the academic year.

² Additional information can be found at <https://www.dallasisd.org/timetolearn> and <https://www.dallasisd.org/esser>

What were the outcomes related to the people component of the ACE program?

Teacher Retention

- In 2021-22, 12 out of 23 (52.2%) ACE campuses met the ACE program objective of having annual teacher retention rates at or above district retention rates (72%).
- Campuses having annual teacher retention rates at or above district retention rates include: Blanton and Dade (ACE 1.0), Carr, Ervin and Titche (ACE 2.0), Chavez, Dunbar, King, and Pease (ACE 3.0), and Burleson, Cochran, and Truett (ACE 4.0).

District Campus Climate Survey

- For spring 2022, nine of the 23 ACE campuses (39.1%) had scores in the fourth or fifth quintile (most positive) on the Culture of Feedback and Support section of the climate survey including Lee and Dade (ACE 1.0), Ervin (ACE 2.0), Dunbar, King, and Pease (ACE 3.0), and Burleson, Cochran, and Johnson (ACE 4.0).
- Six of the 23 (26.1%) ACE campuses had scores in the fourth or fifth quintile on both fall 2021 and spring 2022 climate surveys including Lee and Dade (ACE 1.0), Dunbar and King (ACE 3.0), and Burleson and Johnson (ACE 4.0).

What were the outcomes related to the learning component of the ACE program?

NWEA Measures of Academic Progress

The ACE objective on MAP assessment was for the ACE student rates to be higher than the district rate for the percentage of students at Average Quintile or above. Results showed that:

- One (Martin Luther King Jr.) out of 23 (4.3%) ACE campuses met the goal for EOY Reading - English.
- Fourteen out of 19 (73.7%) ACE elementary campuses met the goal for EOY Reading - Spanish.
- Six (Blanton, Titche, King, Johnson, WH ES, and Truett) of the 23 (26.1%) ACE campuses met the goal for EOY Mathematics.
- ACE campuses demonstrated positive BOY to EOY performance in Reading – English (34.8%), Reading – Spanish (47.4%), and Mathematics (87%).

Assessment of Course Performance

The ACE objective on ACP assessments was for ACE campuses to achieve ACP passing rates for each exam within 10 percentage points or exceeding district rates for fall 2021 and spring 2022. Results showed that:

- ACE 1.0 ACP passing rates were within ten points of or exceeded the district on 60 of 71 (84.5%) fall exams and 11 of 14 (78.6%) spring exams.

- ACE 2.0 ACP passing rates were within ten points or exceeded the district on 46 of 64 (71.9%) fall exams and on 11 of 12 (91.7%) spring exams.
- ACE 3.0 ACP passing rates were within ten points or exceeded the district on 53 of 90 (58.9%) fall exams and two of six (33.3%) spring exams.
- ACE 4.0 ACP passing rates were within ten points or exceeded the district on 49 of 93 (52.7%) fall exams.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

The ACE objective on STAAR was for ACE campuses to achieve STAAR performance at the Approaches+, Meets+, and Masters Grade Level standard attainment rates within ten percentage points or exceeding the district rates. Results showed that:

- Eight of the 23 (34.8%) ACE campuses met the goal for all tested subjects.
- Seventeen of the 23 (73.9%) ACE campuses met the goal on STAAR Reading.
- Fifteen of the 23 (65.2%) ACE campuses met the goal on STAAR Mathematics.
- Thirteen out of the 23 (56.5%) ACE campuses met the goal on STAAR Science.
- Two of the three (66.7%) ACE middle school campuses exceeded the district rates on STAAR Social Studies.
- All ACE cohorts were within ten points of or exceeded the overall district rates for the reading and mathematics STAAR progress measure.

What were the outcomes related to the expectations component of the ACE program?

Attendance Rates

- Attendance rate for the district and all ACE campuses has declined from 2020-21.
- None of the 23 ACE campuses met the program objective of having attendance rates at or above 96 percent.
- Ten of the 23 ACE campuses exceeded the overall district attendance rate (90.8%).

Student Experience Survey

Nineteen of the 23 (82.6%) ACE campuses met the objective of exceeding the overall favorable rate for the district (District Elementary = 82.0%, District Middle/High = 72.0%).

Parent/Guardian Survey

- Eighteen out of the 23 (78.3%) ACE campuses met the goal of meeting or exceeding the district positive response rate (89.4%).

- All ACE 1.0 campuses met the objective of meeting or exceeding the district positive response rate.

What were the 2021 ACE state accountability ratings?

- Fifteen of the 23 (65%) ACE campuses received an overall accountability rating of B.
- Four out of 23 (17%) received an overall accountability rating of C.
- Four ACE campuses (Hotchkiss, Thompson, Cedar Crest, and Douglass) received an overall accountability rating of *Not Rated: Senate Bill 1365*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Monitor the impact of participation in alternative school calendars. Beginning in 2021-22, five ACE campuses (Bryan ES, Ervin ES, Pease ES, Truett ES, and Wilmer-Hutchins ES) implemented the intersession school year calendar and two ACE campuses (Rusk MS and Maple Lawn ES) implemented the school day redesign school year calendar. The other seventeen ACE campuses implemented the traditional school year calendar. District leadership and program managers should review results from the evaluation of these alternative school calendars presented by Watson (2022a and 2022b) to examine the impact of participation in multiple district initiatives aimed at improving student learning outcomes.

Review results of long-term outcomes analyses. In fall 2022, the Dallas ISD Program Evaluation department will publish evaluation findings for ACE participation on long-term student outcomes. Evaluation findings will help district leadership and program managers identify lasting benefits of ACE participation on long-term achievement outcomes (e.g., assessments, college and career readiness, graduation rates, and college enrollment).

Consider updating and revising program goals. The ACE program and goals were originally established in 2015-16. However, the ACE program has experienced significant changes over the past several years which include adding additional ACE campus cohorts and standardizing ACE program supports for all campuses. Additionally, as a result of the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on both academic and non-academic outcomes of students within Dallas ISD, the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees and school leadership have updated district goals to align with current student learning trends. As such, program

managers should review and consider revising ACE program goals to align more closely with the updated district goals and the standardized ACE program supports across ACE campuses.

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