



2026-2027 Principal Excellence Initiative (PEI) Guidebook

07/07/2026

Measuring Principal Effectiveness

Guiding Principles

Principals are the key to maximizing student growth and ensuring successful schools. While effective teachers are required, a competent staff is not sufficient for a district trying to transform. Without effective principals, any large system will find it next to impossible to develop capacity and place a high-quality teacher in front of every child. In order to turn around, a struggling school needs an effective principal to coach teachers, provide useful instructional feedback, monitor the system for continuous improvement, and build a culture of excellence.

"We still won't get to where we need to go unless we're prepared to do three difficult, but essential, things: rebuild our entire K-12 system on a platform of accountability [my emphasis]; attract more top-flight recruits into teaching; and use technology very differently to improve instruction."

Joel Klein, "The Failure of American Schools," Atlantic Monthly

Being a principal in a district challenged by poverty is one of the most demanding jobs in the nation. And there may be no more important work for any group of people in society at this time. The urgency of the work requires a high level of responsibility *and* accountability for results. This means that districts should invest heavily in the recruitment of first-rate principals and develop their capacity to transform schools.

The urgency of the work also requires districts to accurately assess principal effectiveness, emulating those who get results and removing those who, over time, are deemed ineffective. The stakes for our students are high and failure is not an option. Districts should be serious about this, and principals should know this going in. Any district that does not want to introduce real accountability in the system (for superintendents, principals, and teachers) will continue to work sub-optimally and will be unable to transform. As different principals will experience different levels of success (or failure), the evaluation of principals should be similarly differentiated. DISD's evaluation system for principals hopes to accurately measure a principal's effectiveness and compensate her appropriately.

Results matter

Broadly, principals also need to demonstrate leadership and vision, and they must be prepared to make tough decisions. These attributes will be assessed, using the principal's evaluation rubric. Operationally, a school leader's main purpose is to improve the quality of instruction and raise student achievement. At the end of the day, it is increased student proficiency that matters most and encapsulates all of the performance measurements of an effective principal.

Across the country, more and more districts are considering tying principal evaluations to student achievement results. Doing so will require knowing clearly what success looks like, monitoring the system consistently and regularly, coaching principals and providing the support principals need to become effective instructional leaders.

Dallas ISD's evaluation of principals will rely on a combination of performance measurements and student achievement results. This document outlines each metric and the varying levels of success.

Support

The urgency of our work requires a high level of responsibility and accountability for results. This means that districts should invest heavily in the recruitment of first-rate campus leaders, including assistant principals. In Dallas, we will clearly define the role of the assistant principal, support their development and career path, and reward those who get results while removing those who, over time, are deemed ineffective.

What is the Principal Excellence Initiative (PEI)?

PEI is an integrated system for how Dallas ISD defines, supports, and rewards excellence in the principalship.

- **Defining Excellence.** A vision for great school leadership enabled us to establish clear expectations for the principal through a fair, accurate, and rigorous evaluation system. We have worked to ensure that all evaluation components are researched-based and rigorous.
- **Supporting Excellence.** A robust evaluation system provides us with specific data to differentiate professional learning opportunities tailored to each principal's individual needs. In addition to the ongoing feedback that principals receive as part of the evaluation system, we continue to expand professional learning opportunities for leaders at every stage of their career.
- **Rewarding Excellence.** Retaining effective principals is essential to effective schools. We have designed a compensation system that rewards leaders of all school levels and school types based on their overall effectiveness. Having a system that recognizes and rewards our best leaders improves the quality of instruction for all students in our schools.

Measures of Effectiveness

The principal's annual evaluation rating consists of two parts: performance and student achievement. Each component comprises multiple measures of effectiveness. The performance and achievement measures are summarized in the table below and are described in more detail in subsequent pages.

Component	Measure	Points Possible
Performance	Principal Individual Performance	40
	Improving Teacher Effectiveness	5
	Congruence	5
	Student Attendance	5
	Parent Survey	5
	Campus Climate Survey	5
Achievement	School STAAR	10
	School iReady / School ACP	10
	STAAR Achievement Gap	5
	College-Ready Rate*	5
	Career-Ready Rate	5
*The college-ready measure in ES/MS has been reweighted into the career-ready measure in 2023-24 and subsequent scorecards.		

Performance Component Measures

65% of a principal's evaluation is comprised of performance metrics that include the ability to lead transformation, improve instruction, develop a positive and professional school culture, and other areas outlined in the performance rubric. Additional information on the calculation of these measure is available online in the PEI Rulebook: <https://www.dallasisd.org/team-dallas-isd/evaluation-tools/principal-excellence-initiative-pei>

1. Principal Individual Performance (40 Points)

The Principal Performance Rubric (PPR) is Dallas ISD's definition of effective school leadership and is the tool driving performance and campus management. The rubric provides a detailed explanation of essential teacher skills and actions, student behaviors, and performance levels. The rubric is comprised of 18 indicators of principal practice across five domains: *Organizational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Climate and Culture, and Human Capital*.

Domain 1: Organizational Leadership <i>Oversees systems, structures, and processes for continuous improvement</i> 1.1 Vision, Mission & Goals: Collaboratively sets evidence-based vision, mission, and goals that reflect high expectations for every student & ensures the vision, mission, and goals drive school decisions. 1.2 Strategic Planning & Change Management: Collaboratively creates and executes schoolwide plans supported by strategic resource allocation resulting in an effective change management process. 1.3 Continuous Improvement: Creates and implements a continuous improvement cycle that integrates transparent planning, implementation, data review, and strategic adjustments to achieve sustained practices that result in measurable improvement. 1.4 Systems & Structures: Effectively organizes and manages school logistics (time, people, resources) to accomplish school goals and create a positive, inclusive school culture. (3X)	Domain 2: Instructional Leadership <i>Ensures rigorous and coherent curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned to the needs of every student</i> 2.1 Courses & Content: Ensures academic programing and curricular resources rigorously prepare students for academic and postsecondary success and align to student and school needs. 2.2 Quality of Instruction: Oversees implementation of effective instructional strategies and interventions aligned to student and school needs. (3X) 2.3 Instructional Feedback: Coaches and develops educators by giving timely, relevant, and constructive individualized feedback that supports growth (3X) 2.4 Assessment & Data Practices: Oversees the implementation of an assessment system that measures the depth and breadth of student learning, monitors progress towards college and career readiness, and produces actionable data to inform planning for instruction, academic supports, and resource allocation. (3X)
Domain 4: Human Capital <i>Ensures development and retention of talent and cultivates distributed leadership structures</i> 4.1 Development & Evaluation: Creates opportunities and structures for continuous growth of staff and self by ensuring they have access to training, coaching and/or other developmental resources. Provides fair assessments of performance including timely feedback to inform development. (2X) 4.2 Professional Culture & Retention: Creates a collaborative professional culture in which staff of all backgrounds feel valued, respected, and want to stay and contribute to the school's goals. 4.3 Distributed Leadership: Creates and supports effective teams, consistently distributing leadership roles and responsibilities, and develops staff leadership capacity in a manner that results in improvements to academic and operational performance. (3X)	Domain 3: Climate and Culture <i>Ensures that organizational norms, routines, and systems equitably promote students' intellectual, social, and emotional development</i> 3.1 Connectedness & Wellbeing: Creates a school climate that promotes social, emotional, and physical health and ensures the safety, positive behavior, and well-being of all students, staff, and self. (2X) 3.2 Family & Community Engagement: Proactively fosters relationships with families, local school committees, and community members. Leverages family and community assets, and helps students and families own and contribute to school's goals.

The full Principal Performance Rubric is available online at: <https://www.dallasisd.org/team-dallas-isd/evaluation-tools/principal-excellence-initiative-pei>

Performance Check Points

As outlined below, Principal performance will be gauged on the PPR annually in a four-phased evaluation cycle designed to provide ongoing performance feedback on individual performance and student growth.

Check Point	Timeframe	Key Outcomes	Required Steps in Cornerstone
Check Point 1	August 3 – August 21	Principal and ED agree upon the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) implementation and identify area(s) of focus using the revised PPR during the pre-conference.	Areas of Focus: Principal selects two to three indicators from the PPR to focus on (as approved by the ED) for the upcoming school year Conference Acknowledgement: CIP implementation, PEI components and PPR focus indicators reviewed
Check Point 2	October 12 – October 23	Executive Director and Principal discuss the PPR and use data as a way to check PPR growth and CIP implementation. Particular attention will be placed on implementation of processes.	Areas of Focus: ED review progress on selected PPR indicators Praise, Probe, & Polish Conference Acknowledgement: CIP, Data, and Processes
Check Point 3	January 11 – January 29	Executive Director and Principal discuss the PPR and use data as a way to check progress towards PPR growth and CIP implementation. Particular attention will be placed on the data outcomes of semester one.	Principal Self-Assessment Areas of Focus: ED review progress on selected PPR indicators Praise, Probe, & Polish Conference Acknowledgement: CIP, Data, and Processes
Check Point 4	May 17 – June 18	Principal and ED use data as a way to check progress towards CIP implementation. Particular attention will be placed on the data outcomes for the year. ED completes PEI Summative Review.	ED Summative Review Praise, Probe, & Polish Conference Acknowledgement: CIP, Data, and Processes

Additional information to support PEI Check Points, including guiding questions and recommended data for review, is available online at <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/41972>

2. Improving Teacher Effectiveness (5)

This measure assesses the overall improvement in evaluation scores among teachers at a school. The metric is the “teacher effectiveness score.” The score is the average difference between standardized evaluation

scores from the current (latest) year and the previous year. Points are awarded for improving teacher effectiveness.

3. Congruence between performance and achievement (5 pts)

Without careful planning, teacher summative evaluations will become inflated over time, making it harder to accurately assess staff effectiveness and the principal's ability to build capacity. One way to assess true capacity building versus evaluation inflation is to summative scores with achievement results.

4. Student Enrollment and Attendance (5 pts)

This measure currently assesses improvement in the school's student attendance rate. Its single metric is average student attendance rate.

5. Parent/Guardian Survey (5 pts)

The measure assesses the support of parents and guardians in the school's community for the direction of the school and its engagement with parents. The district contracts with a vendor to conduct an annual survey that captures their opinions about the direction of the school and quality of education provided to students. There are twelve questions that have been used for the measure's statistics since 2012-13, and points are earned in two ways: per points may be earned in two ways: average of the scale-level percentages of positive response or change in the average of the scale-level percentage of positive responses.

6. Campus Climate Survey (5 pts)

The campus climate survey is administered to all campus-based professional and support staff twice per year. The survey has three purposes: to aid in organizational improvement; to obtain feedback from school-based employees; and to align systems to student outcomes, with the first being its primary purpose. Similar to the Parent/Guardian survey, points may be earned in two ways: average of the scale-level percentages of positive response or change in the average of the scale-level percentage of positive responses.

Achievement Component Measures

Thirty-five percent of a principal's evaluation is tied to multiple measures of student achievement. These include state assessment (STAAR) results, district assessment (ACP) results, achievement gap statistics, college-ready rates (for high schools only), and other achievement metrics. Further detail, including methodology and cut points, can be found in the PEI Rulebook here: <https://www.dallasisd.org/team-dallasisd/evaluation-tools/principal-excellence-initiative-pei>

1. School STAAR (10 points)

The School STAAR measure is determined by statistics generated for all STAAR assessments at the campus. The principal's score is based on the best of three STAAR metrics:

1. Percentage of all tests with scores at Met standard ("status metric")
2. Relative growth measurement (SEI)
3. Percentage of students exceeding the District average score within their "academic peer groups"

Like TEI, the principals receive points for the greatest of the three measures, and separate distributions will be developed for elementary and secondary campuses.

2. School iReady* Growth and ACP (10 points)

Similar to School STAAR, the School ACP measure is determined by statistics generated for all ACP assessments at the campus. The principal's score is based on the best of three ACP metrics:

1. Percentage of all tests with scores at “passing” standard (“status metric”)
2. Relative growth measurement (SEI)
3. Percentage of students exceeding the District average score within their “academic peer groups”

**iReady measure will be included for elementary campuses and this will be reweighted to 5 points NWEA iReady Growth and 5 points School ACP for secondary campuses*

3. School Achievement Gap (5 points)

The School Achievement Gap measure is designed to reward a decrease in the STAAR reading and mathematics achievement gap between the school's results from African American and Hispanic students and the state's results from white students. Points are awarded using a “gap statistic” with points maximized for campuses that decrease the gap.

4. College Ready Rate (5 points)

Elementary and Middle Schools*

In prior years, for middle and elementary school principals, the College-Ready measure was determined from STAAR Writing assessment results at the campus.

**This measure is undergoing revision; updated guidebook may reflect changes for the 2024-25 cycle.*

High Schools

The points for this measure are equivalent to the highest points earned from one of three metrics based on student scores on The College Board's SAT® and TSIA. Cut points for individual metrics are set such that the percentage of schools receiving each point value for the *measure* follows the target distribution.

5. Career Ready Rate (5 points)

Elementary and Middle Schools

For middle and elementary school principals, the Career-Ready measure is determined from Grades 5 and 8 STAAR reading and mathematics assessment results at the campus. Similar to the school STAAR measure, points for this measure are equivalent to the highest points earned from one of three STAAR metrics, with the exception that only **STAAR Reading/Mathematics (Grades 5 and 8)** scores are used in their computation.

High Schools

There are two metrics proposed for the high-school version of the career readiness measure.

1. Graduation rate
2. Percentage of graduates receiving a career-ready certificate

As of 2015-16, only the graduation rate metric has been defined.

Priority Campus Points – District Support Initiative

Beginning in 2021-2022, principals at the District's Priority Campuses may receive additional points for service at an HPC. Principals must earn a minimum of 65 for the individual performance rubric appraisal and earn half of the available points for student achievement (18 out of 35) to be eligible. Eligible principals will earn 5 points in the first year and one additional point thereafter up to 10 if criteria is met.

Evaluation Scores, Evaluation Ratings, and Effectiveness Levels

The PEI process outlines above results in an overall evaluation score that informs an Evaluation Score, Evaluation Rating, and Effectiveness Level annually. There are four major steps in developing an overall PEI evaluation rating and effectiveness level.

Step 1: Calculate each component score

As described in earlier sections, each component of the principal's evaluation template – performance and achievement – is calculated according to the percentages outlined in the previous pages.

Step 2: Add component scores to total an overall evaluation score

Each component score is then added for an overall score (out of 100 possible points).

Step 3: Determine average evaluation score and evaluation ratings using the target distribution

When available, the Evaluation Rating is determined using an average of the current and prior years' evaluation scores. The Evaluation Rating is determined from this average evaluation score using the PEI target distribution as a guide.

Step 4: Apply relevant rules to determine effectiveness level Each year, principals receive both an evaluation rating and an effectiveness level. The evaluation rating is discussed above. After application of relevant system rules, the PEI effectiveness level is what is associated with compensation

PEI Rules for Evaluation Ratings and Effectiveness Levels

- Administrators placed into their positions during a school year when no students are enrolled at the school will not receive a PEI Scorecard, evaluation rating, or effectiveness level for that school year.
- Evaluation Scores, Evaluation Ratings and Effectiveness Levels cannot be carried across school levels (Elementary, Middle, High). When an assignment changes, no average evaluation score will be computed, and no rules for carryover of Effectiveness Levels will apply.
- Administrators must be placed into the position as campus principals no later than December 31st annually to earn an Effectiveness Level. Assignments that begin after this date will receive a scorecard for information only and report "No Rating." Interim Principal assignments are not PEI Eligible.
- If a principal is assigned by District Leadership to oversee two campuses, the current year evaluation score will be based on a weighted average based on enrollment of the two campuses. If the two campus types differ (choice or comprehensive), the evaluation rating cut points will match the comprehensive campus.
- The Effectiveness Level cannot change (increase or decrease) by more than one level from one year to the next.
- The effectiveness level will not decrease for three years after an evaluation rating first indicates that the effectiveness level should have decreased. In the fourth year after the lower evaluation rating was first reached, if all intervening evaluation ratings were below the latest effectiveness level, the effectiveness level will decrease one level.
- **Effectiveness Levels will be capped at Progressing III for principals in their first year as a principal in Dallas ISD.**

Version	Date	Location	Description
1.0	07/07/2026		2026-2027 PEI Guidebook
2.0			
3.0			