



2026-2027 Assistant Principal Excellence Initiative (APEI) Guidebook

07/07/2026

Measuring Principal Effectiveness

Guiding Principles

Our efforts to transform Dallas ISD have focused on investing in our people and developing our human capital. In particular, we have fundamentally changed how we assess principal effectiveness and coach principals. Principal evaluations are now tied to student achievement results and other key performance metrics. Principal compensation is also tied to overall effectiveness. Similarly, Dallas ISD teacher evaluations are tied to performance and student achievement results.

“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*

While principals may be the key to reform, it is clear, too, that a principal must build a strong leadership team to transform a school. In Dallas, assistant principals are also instructional leaders whose main responsibilities mirror closely those of the principal. Assistant principals are accountable for raising student achievement results, coaching teachers in order to improve the quality of instruction and building and sustaining a positive and supportive school culture. As the role of the assistant principal is very similar to that of the principal, the AP evaluation system will be based on many of the same performance and achievement metrics.

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 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 Assistant Principal Excellence Initiative (APEI)?

APEI 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 AP’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 APs 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 assistant 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	Assistant Principal Individual Performance	45
	Improving Teacher Effectiveness	5
	Congruence	5
	Specific Goals	10
Achievement	School STAAR	10
	School ACP/iReady Diagnostic	10
	STAAR Achievement Gap	5
	College-Ready Rate*	5
	Career-Ready Rate	5

*The college-ready measure has been reweighted into the Career-Ready measure for 2023-24 and subsequent year scorecards.

Performance Component Measures

65% of a assistant 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/APEI Rulebook: <https://www.dallasisd.org/team-dallas-isd/evaluation-tools/assistant-principal-excellence-initiative-apei>

1. Assistant principal Individual Performance (45 Points)

The Assistant 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 assistant principal skills and actions and performance levels. The rubric is comprised of 18 indicators of assistant principal practice across five domains: *Organizational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Climate and Culture, and Human Capital*.

The full Assistant Principal Performance Rubric (PPR) is available online at: <https://www.dallasisd.org/team-dallas-isd/evaluation-tools/assistant-principal-excellence-initiative-apei>

Performance Check Points/Phases

As outlined below, assistant 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.

	Due By*	NOTES
Checkpoint 1	September 1 – October 16	- Assistant Principal selects one additional APEI Goal: Climate & Culture, Discipline or Classroom Instruction. - All APs are measured on student attendance. - In Person Conference to include discussion of data from prior year, goal selected and components of APEI evaluation and calendar
Checkpoint 2	January 12 – February 26	- Assistant Principals self-evaluates performance on the APEI Performance Rubric. - In Person Conference to include discussion of self-evaluation on APEI Performance Rubric and progress towards goals.
Checkpoint 3	May 17 – June 10	- Principal reviews and submits scores for the APEI Performance Rubric. - In Person Conference to include discussion of evaluation

Additional information to support APEI Check Points, including guiding questions and recommended data for review, is available online at <https://www.dallasisd.org/team-dallas-isd/evaluation-tools/assistant-principal-excellence-initiative-apei>

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 assistant principal’s ability to build capacity. One way to assess true capacity building versus evaluation inflation is to summative scores with achievement results.

4. Congruence between performance and achievement (10 pts)

All Assistant Principals will have two specific goals, each worth 5 points

Specific Goal #1: Student attendance or enrollment

This measure assesses improvement in the student attendance rate. Specific Goal #1 is assigned to all Assistant Principals. At a future date, the measure may alternatively assess improvement in the percentage of students living within the school’s attendance boundaries who are attending district schools. If this

second metric is developed, the assistant principal will receive the greater of points earned from the two metrics (attendance rate or enrollment rate). Until that time, the only metric for the measure will be the average student attendance rate. Elementary schools are grouped separately from secondary schools for assigning point values for this measure. There are thus two sets of cut points for this measure.

Specific Goal #2: “Climate and Culture”, “Discipline”, or “Classroom Instruction”

For the second goal, the campus principal will select one goal from among three options (listed below). In each option, the metric is the change in percentage of positive responses to relevant climate survey items, described for each option below. The highest metric values (largest positive changes) will earn five points; the lowest metric values will earn no points. Point values for ranges of metric values will be determined using the target distribution after all campus’s statistics are computed.

Option 1: Climate and Culture

By Spring 2027, the climate survey results related to “positive culture and environment” will improve from the Spring 2026 administration of the survey. The metric is the change in percentage of positive responses to the climate survey items related to “positive culture and environment.”

Option 2: Discipline

By Spring 2027, the climate survey results related to “discipline” will improve from the Spring 2026 administration of the survey. The metric is the change in percentage of positive responses to the following two questions from the climate survey:

- “Discipline is enforced consistently and effectively at my campus.”
- “Unruly students are not permitted to disrupt the learning environment.”

Option 3: Classroom Instruction

By Spring 2027, the climate survey results related to “instructional support” will improve from the Spring 2026 administration of the survey. Points will be based on percent increase in positive responses to the following three questions from the climate survey:

- “My campus leadership helps me improve the quality of my instruction.”
- “The instructional feedback I get helps me improve the quality of my instruction”
- “The professional development sessions at my school this year helped me improve instruction.”

If the assistant principal does not take action to select Specific Goal #2 in Cornerstone by established deadlines, 0 out of 5 points will be awarded for Specific Goal #2.

Achievement Component Measures

Thirty-five percent of a assistant 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-dallas-isd/evaluation-tools/assistant-principal-excellence-initiative-apei>

1. School STAAR (10 points)

The School STAAR measure is determined by statistics generated for all STAAR assessments at the campus. The assistant 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 assistant principals receive points for the greatest of the three measures, and separate distributions will be developed for elementary and secondary campuses.

2. School iReady* and ACP (10 points)

Similar to School STAAR, the School iReady/MAP 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”

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 2022-23 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 assistant 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. The district has not yet created its career-ready certification program for high school students. Highest point values are assigned to the highest statistics, according to the target distribution.

Priority Campus Points – District Support Initiative

Beginning in 2021-2022, assistant principals at the District's Priority Campuses may receive additional points for service at a District Support Initiative campus. APs 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 APs 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 APEI 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 assistant 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, assistant 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.

APEI 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 an evaluation rating for that school year.
- Evaluation Scores, Evaluation Ratings and Effectiveness Levels cannot be carried across school levels (Elementary, Middle, High) or compensation classification type. 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 assistant 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 Assistant Principal assignments are not APEI Eligible.
- 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 assistant principals in their first year as an assistant principal in Dallas ISD.**

GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns and grievances with their supervisor/appraiser, assistant principal, or other appropriate administrator.

Option 1: A assistant principal may submit a written response or rebuttal within 10 working days of receiving their summative evaluation. Employees are notified of their 10-day rebuttal window via **Cornerstone**. Rebuttals submitted by employees are shared with their evaluator and added to the summative performance evaluation within their employee file. **Evaluators are not required to respond or act on a rebuttal. A rebuttal is NOT a grievance.**

Option 2: When informal discussions fail to resolve the concern or dispute, the employee may file a grievance with the Employee Relations Department. **The grievance process precipitates a response and/or action. See DGBA at <http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/361?filter=DGBA>.**

A grievance form must be filed no later than fifteen (15) business days from the date the employee first knew or, with reasonable diligence, should have known of the decision or action giving rise to the grievance or complaint. Please contact Employee Relations for additional information or clarification.

CONTACT

For more information, contact Performance Management at 972.749.5712 or performancemanagement@dallasisd.org.

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