

**Examining the Teacher Excellence Initiative and  
Accelerated Campus Excellence Program**

## The Truth about TEI

The Teacher Excellence Initiative, TEI, is the merit-pay system used in Dallas ISD. However, it is not a true merit-pay system, it is actually a targeted (or forced) distribution system that purports to identify teachers based on effectiveness levels and stack ranks them accordingly. There are several myths about the TEI that will be clarified here.

TEI Myth #1: TEI is a valid tool for evaluating teachers.

**FACT:** The RAND corporation, in a study released in 2018, concluded that a multi-year experiment in TEI-type teacher evaluations, not only failed to improve teacher effectiveness, but also failed to improve academic outcomes, especially among minority and low-income students.<sup>1</sup>

- TEI incorporates Value-Added Modeling (VAM), a method determined by experts in statistics to be flawed.<sup>2</sup>
- Over a third (35%) of a teacher's rating is based on standardized test scores.
- After spending over \$550 million on pay for performance teacher systems, the Gates Foundation stopped investing in these initiatives because they failed to result in improved outcomes for students.<sup>3</sup>
- Cities and states across the country such as Pittsburgh PA and Ohio are ending their pay for performance evaluation systems because they have failed. Dallas should follow suit.

TEI Myth #2: TEI is needed to identify highly effective teachers.

**FACT:** Master teachers and principals are capable of identifying the most effective teachers.

- The initial cohort of ACE teachers were identified by principals *six months prior* to calculated TEI ratings.

TEI Myth #3: Over 90% of teachers received a salary increase for the 2017-18 school year.

**FACT:** Although technically a true statement, when you factor in inflation, rising health care premiums, and retirement contributions 81% of teachers received no increase or an actual pay cut.

- In 2016-17, 43% of teachers received \$0.
- Librarians and counselors have not received salary increases over the past four years.

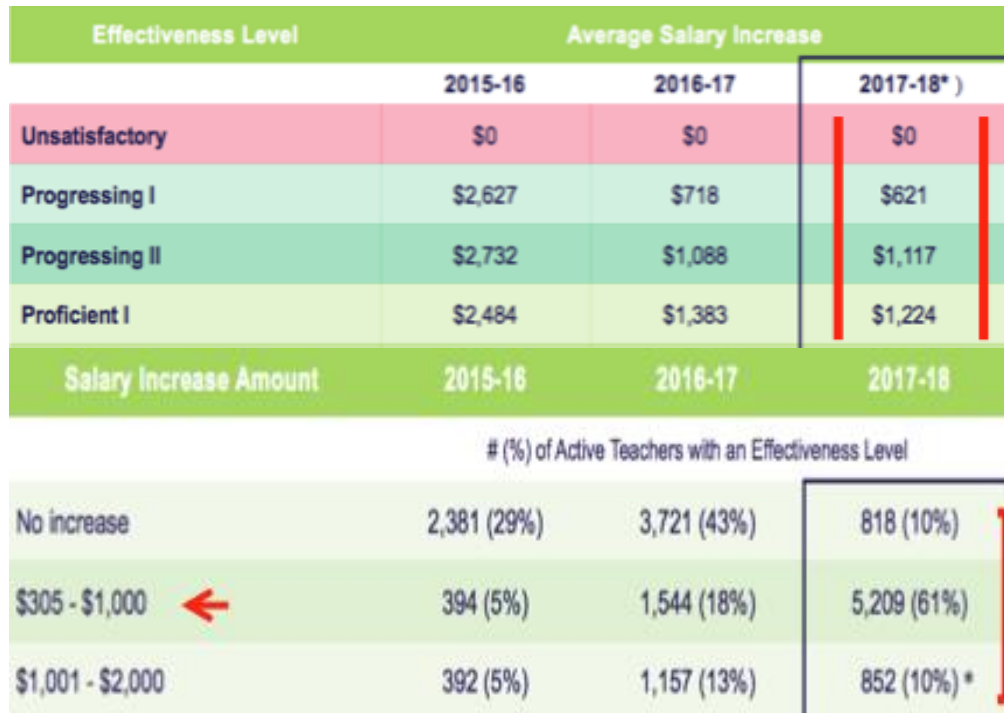


Figure 1. DISD average salary increases by effectiveness level and the distribution of salary increases.

As noted in Figure 1, eighty percent of teachers are rated Proficient I and below, thus have an average annual salary of \$56,000 or less. Figure 1 shows the largest annual increase given was \$1,224 with the majority receiving < \$1,000. With inflation at 2.9%, one needs \$1,624 on a salary of \$56K to keep pace.

TEI Myth #4: TEI places highly effective teachers in the low-performing schools.

**FACT:** TEI and salary data demonstrates that TEI favors teachers at predominantly white campuses, high socioeconomic status campuses, and magnet and choice schools.<sup>4</sup> Thus, **TEI is not identifying high performing teachers, it is identifying teachers of high performing students who already have an advantage.** In other words, TEI is biased and paying teachers based on who they are assigned to teach, which is blatantly unfair. [Read Dr. Michael Dryden’s analysis of TEI here.](#)

### Percent of teachers within each TEI category by choice and non-choice (neighborhood) campus.

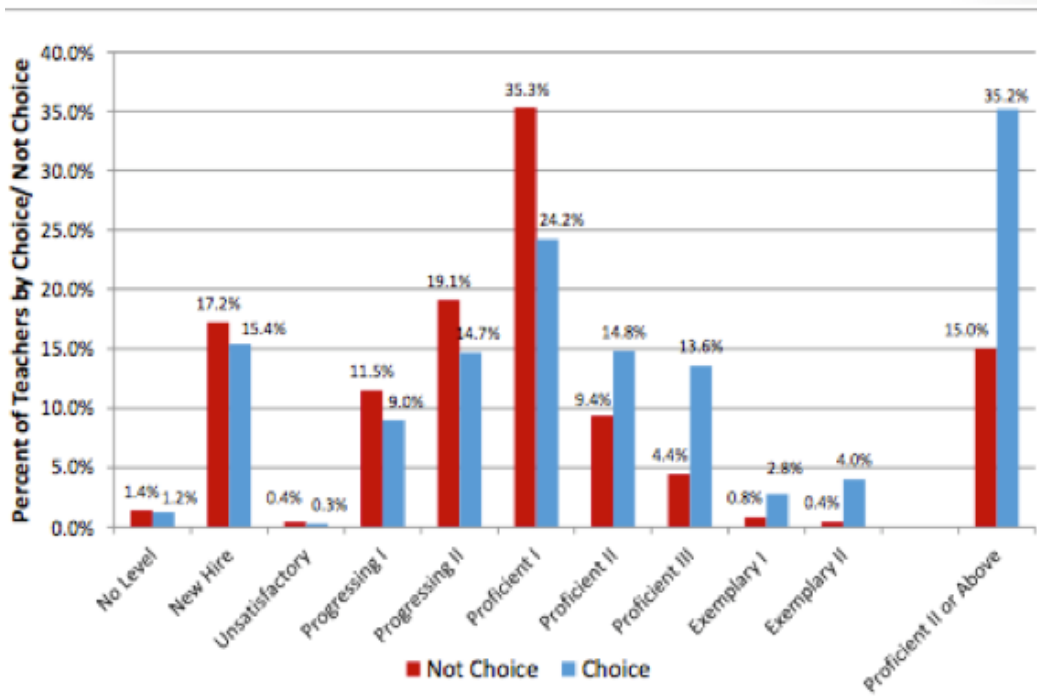
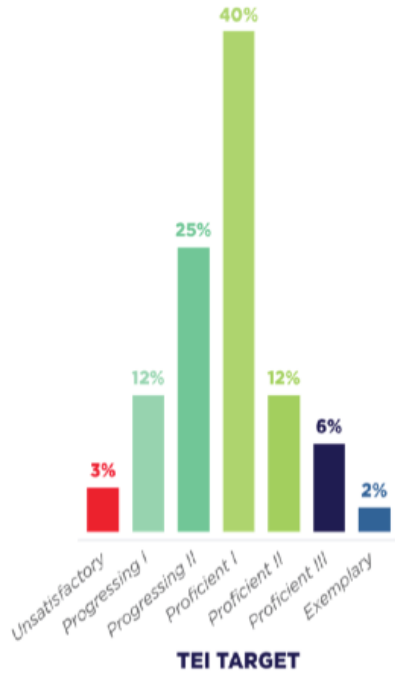


Figure 2. Percent of teachers within each TEI category by choice and non-choice campus<sup>5</sup>.

TEI Myth #5: TEI is a pay for performance system.

**FACT:** TEI is not true pay for performance, rather it is a targeted (forced) distribution system.

- No matter how great a teacher is, 80% *can never* be rated as “highly effective” in the TEI.
- This results in competition among teachers instead of collaboration.



**Target Distribution** is the district's goal for the allocation of effectiveness levels.

80% of teachers are forced to Prof I and below.

Source: DISD TEI Teacher Guidebook

TEI Myth #6: TEI is a great recruiting tool.

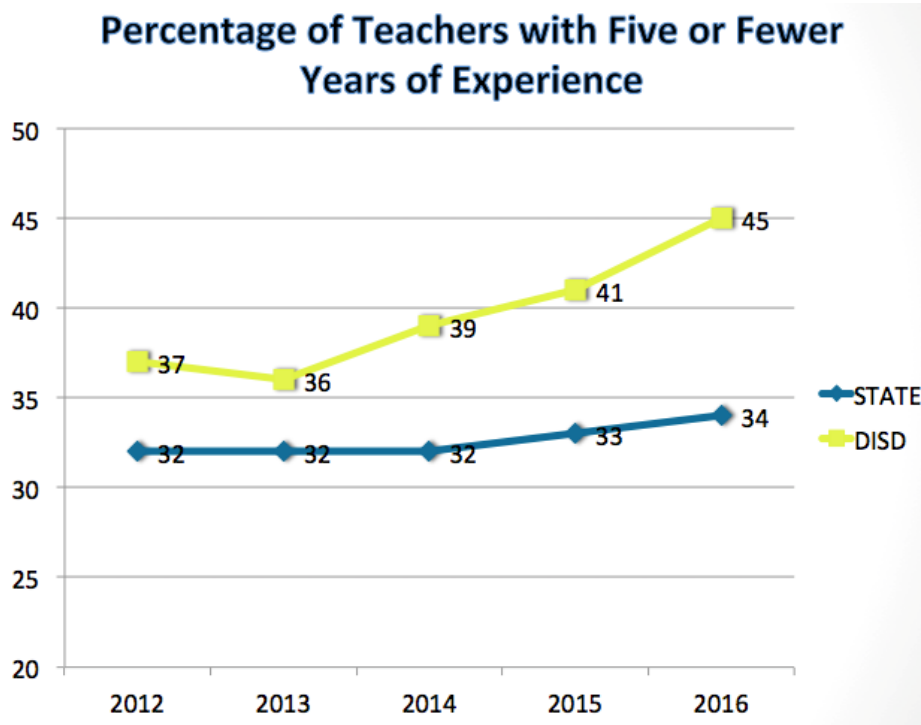
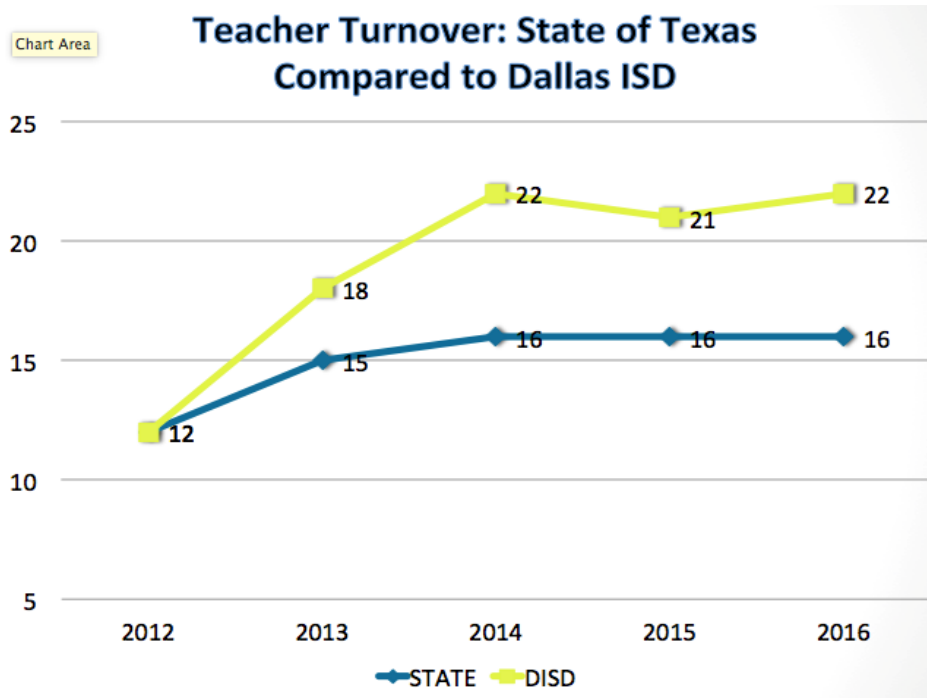
**FACT:** TEI attracts new and inexperienced teachers, and encourages the exit of experienced veteran teachers.

- Studies show that veteran teachers are more effective than those new to the profession.
- TEI flatlines salaries starting at around the five year mark, which means that teachers have less incentive to stay in DISD.

## Salary Comparison-Most Likely Scenario (Proficient I)



- DISD's turnover rate has nearly doubled from 12% before TEI in 2012 to 22% after in 2016. During that same period, the percentage of teachers with  $\leq 5$  years of experience increased by 8%.



- **The claims of 14-15% DISD teacher turnover are inaccurate, and incorporate only partial year data.** Dallas ISD presented this inaccurate information to the Texas Commission on Public School Finance in support of TEI. Dallas local media and the business community have also presented this inaccurate data.

**Teacher Counts, CYS, Retention, % Increase, Average Salary**

Effectiveness Level	No. of Teachers (% Change from Previous Year)	Avg. CYS	Retention	Percentage Salary Increase	Average Salary	
					2016-2017	2017-2018
Unsatisfactory	88 (+6%)	9.9	51%	0%	\$53,239	\$53,239
Progressing I	1,540 (-23%)	4.0	77%	1%	\$51,264	\$51,885
Progressing II	2,369 (-5%)	8.3	82%	2%	\$53,503	\$54,620
Proficient I	4,099 (+6%)	13.1	88%	2%	\$56,820	\$58,044
Proficient II	1,113 (+6%)	13.7	93%	4%	\$59,134	\$61,294
Proficient III	556 (+31%)	14.2	96%	7%	\$61,309	\$65,676
Exemplary I	102 (+21%)	14.1	95%	16%	\$62,718	\$74,711
Exemplary II	74 (+24%)	15.6	99%	21%	\$65,001	\$82,556
<b>Overall</b>	<b>9,941</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>\$55,877</b>	<b>\$57,529</b>

**\$5,000 salary cap removed**

**Eligible Progressing II and higher teachers received a performance retention increase.**

2015-2016  
State Average  
83%

Inaccurate, data only includes partial year, May-September.

All numbers are preliminary and may change as additional information becomes available.

Source: Dallas ISD, *TEI: 2017 Overview and Update* (November 2017, Presentation to the Board of Trustees)



## **References**

<sup>1</sup> Stecher, B.M., et.al, Improving Teaching Effectiveness: Final Report: The Intensive Partnerships for Effective Teaching Through 2015–2016. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018.  
[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2242.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2242.html).

<sup>2</sup> American Statistical Association Statement on Value-Added Models for Educational Assessment. April 8, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2018/06/21/an-expensive-experiment-gates-teacher-effectiveness-program-show.html>

<sup>4</sup> Mitch Barton, Ph.D. & Dianne Palladino, Ph.D. , 2016-17 Evaluation of Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI). EA18-539-4

<sup>5</sup> Public release of Dallas ISD aggregate TEI ratings by campus 2017.

**ACE and ISN – Resources Matter!**  
Unraveling the Mystery

The Accelerating Campus Excellence ([ACE](#)) program provides monetary incentives for teachers and principals to work at the highest-needs schools. In addition to replacing staff, the ACE program lengthens the school day allowing for more intervention and enrichment; provides meals, after-school care and uniforms to students; beautifies campuses and upgrades classrooms; supplements professional development for staff; and increases staffing with an additional assistant principal, counselor, and instructional coach for every 300 students.

DISD’s teacher evaluation system, TEI, purports to be able to identify the district’s most effective teachers. The ACE program was supposed to place a majority of these TEI designated highly effective teachers (known as DTR) in Improvement Required (IR) schools with the goal of improving student academic outcomes. However, in reality the district did not meet the goal of having > 50% DTR teachers on ACE campuses and there is no evidence that IR schools improve as a direct result of TEI.

In 2014 DISD had 43 campuses on Improvement Required (IR) status and in 2018 (at the time of this writing) DISD has 4 schools on IR status<sup>1,2</sup>. Though the DISD administration, local media, and business community have only promoted ACE, there are three important points to make about the district’s IR reduction:

- **The vast majority of schools that have come off of IR in DISD were non-ACE schools.**
- **The Intensive Support Network (ISN), an initiative separate from ACE for IR campuses, was successful and much less costly.**
- **Both ACE and ISN program success is due to added resources and not TEI.** ([Read an analysis of the ACE and ISN programs here](#)).

The table below lists the total number of schools removed from and added to IR between 2014-2018. A total of 52 non-ACE campuses were removed from IR status while 12 ACE campuses were removed.

School Year	# Schools on IR beginning of the year	Removed IR non-ACE	Removed IR ACE	# Schools Added to IR end of year	# IR Schools Closed end of year
2014-15	43	19		13	
2015-16	37	19	6	9	
2016-17	21	9	0	3	2
2017-18	13	5	6*	2	3*
2018-19	4				
		52	12		

\*Three ACE schools were closed/converted even though removed from IR status (Edison-students to Pinkston HS, JW Ray-students to Chavez, O. Hernandez-students to Maple Lawn).

In the spring of 2015, DISD selected teachers for its new ACE program, which was implemented in the following school year 2015-16. Since initial TEI ratings weren't calculated until the fall of 2015, the ACE teachers were selected a full six months prior to having TEI ratings; and so the teachers selected were not selected based on TEI.

The ACE campuses were not staffed with a majority of DTR teachers. In the 2015-16 school year ACE campuses had 39.5% of teachers rated DTR and just 31% in 2016-17<sup>3,4</sup>. Thus in the second year of ACE over two-thirds (69%) of the teaching staff were not considered highly effective by TEI. Also, the average teacher retention rate at ACE campuses was only 69% and as low as 53% at some campuses<sup>4</sup>.

DISD implemented the ISN program in 2016-17 at nine IR campuses and at nine high-risk for IR campuses. At the end of the school year, the ISN program successfully removed four campuses from IR status and kept nine high risk for IR campuses at Met Standard.

The non-ACE IR campuses in 2016-17 had 3% DTR teachers. Yet these 97% TEI deemed less effective teachers were able to remove 9 campuses from IR status and keep 9 other campuses at Met Standard.

A reasonable person would conclude that TEI is an invalid measure of teacher effectiveness and not related to IR removal success in the district.

The cost difference between the ACE and ISN programs is significant:

	ISN	ACE
Number of Schools	18	6
Annual Cost	\$2.2M <sup>5</sup>	\$5.4M <sup>6</sup>

Dallas ISD is to be commended for the significant success of lowering the number of IR campuses. Impoverished, struggling campuses have higher and diverse needs that require increased and diverse resources. Resources stabilize the foundation and allow dedicated teachers and administrators to build the framework upon which students learn.

## **References**

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/data/reports/2013-14/1A\\_TAPR-rpt-2013-14.pdf](https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/data/reports/2013-14/1A_TAPR-rpt-2013-14.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://txschools.org/districts/057905/campus-list>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/evaluation/15-16/finalrpts/EA16-601-2-Accelerating%20Campus%20Excellence.pdf>  
Figure 6.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/evaluation/16-17/finalrpts/EA17-601-2%20Full%20Accelerating%20Campus%20Excellence%20ACE.pdf>  
See pg. 19 and/or Appendix G, pg. 81.

<sup>5</sup> <https://thehub.dallasisd.org/2016/03/22/proposed-intensive-support-network-to-r>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2017/02/08/dallas-isd-plans-close-two-schools-expand-turnaround-program>