

2017-18 Evaluation of Public School Choice

At-a-Glance

The purpose of Public School Choice (PSC) was to provide “best-fit schools” for all students. In 2017-18, Dallas Independent School District (ISD) operated 17 Transformation and Innovation Choice Schools: five Transformation Schools, eight Innovation Schools, and four conditional Innovation Schools. Transformation Schools were new schools without traditional attendance zones whereas Innovation Schools were existing schools and limited to the students within the school’s attendance zone.

The total amount available for 2017-18 was \$2,742,509. The funding amount included \$2,344,509 from district funds, \$215,000 from the New School Venture Fund (NSVF), and \$183,000 from Title II funds.

A component of the PSC initiative included budget autonomy, which allowed school administrators to decide how they allocated funds and allowed them to roll over funds for up to three years.

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the 1) characteristics of Transformation and Innovation Schools; 2) executive director, campus administrator, and teacher perceptions of PSC; 3) characteristics and outcomes of Dallas ISD’s socioeconomic diversity pilot; and 4) outcomes of Choice School students.

Methodology

Contextual information was gathered from internal documents, interviews, and informal classroom observations. Student data were extracted from the October 2017 Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) file for analyses. The results of *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, and the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* exams were extracted from Dallas ISD’s MyData Portal site and district files. PSC Survey, District Climate Survey and Student Experience Survey results were also analyzed. Frequency and crosstabs analyses were tabulated. The collected qualitative data were synthesized.

Student and School Selection Processes

Students who lived in Innovation School attendance zones were automatically selected to attend, whereas, the Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) utilized a lottery process to select from the pool

of student applicants for Transformation Schools. After the lottery process, OTI conducted an equity audit to ensure a wide range of socioeconomic diversity in the schools. Waitlisted students could be granted enrollment to meet equity goals.

Due to high demand, there were markedly more applications submitted than seats available across all four years of the initiative. Student acceptance rates were 43 percent in the spring of 2015, 38 percent in the spring of 2016, 36 percent in the spring of 2017, and 59 percent in the spring of 2018. Of the 1,796 students accepted to a Transformation School in the spring of 2018, approximately 32 percent were students not enrolled in a Dallas ISD school at the time of application.

OTI established a rigorous three-step application process for teams wanting to initiate a Choice School. The process required each team to submit a proposal to be reviewed by the School Choice Committee (SCC) followed by two rounds of interviews. Twenty-three proposals were submitted in spring 2015, two of which were selected to launch in 2015-16. Eight proposals were submitted in spring 2016, two of which were selected to launch in 2016-17. Eleven proposals were submitted in spring 2017, two of which were selected to launch in 2017-18. Fourteen proposals were submitted in spring 2018, seven of which were selected to launch in 2018-19. Three additional Choice Schools, scheduled to launch in fall of 2018 were added to the PSC initiative.

Implementation of Choice Schools

A total of 10,176 students attended a Choice School in 2017-18, which was an increase from 8,688 students in 2016-17. Most (n=8,464) attended an Innovation School and the remaining 1,712 students attended a Transformation School. Table 1 reports the characteristics of Dallas ISD Choice Schools.

Table 1: 2017-18 Dallas ISD Choice Schools

Choice School and Anchor Model	Grades Served	Students (N)
Transformation Schools		
Mata ES (Montessori)	PK to 5	497
Solar Preparatory School for Girls (STEAM)	K to 2	194
Hulcy STEAM MS (STEAM)	6 to 7	376
CityLab HS (Urban Planning)	9	81
IDEA HS (Personalized Learning)	9 to 10	214
Innovation Schools		
De Zavala ES (Montessori)	PK to 5	409
Rogers ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	514
Botello ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	558
Cabell ES (Personalized Learning)	PK to 5	558
Lipscomb ES (IB)*	PK to 5	509
R. Lee ES (IB)*	PK to 5	318
Kramer ES (IB)*	PK to 5	567
Preston Hollow ES (IB)*	PK to 5	476
Weiss ES (Leadership)	PK to 5	548
Marsh PA (Personalized Learning)	6 to 8	911
Franklin MS (IB)*	6 to 8	966
Adams HS (Leadership)	9 to 12	2,040

Note: STEAM=Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Mathematics. ES=Elementary School. PA=Preparatory Academy. MS=Middle School. HS=High School. IB=International Baccalaureate. *These schools were funded by OTI as conditional Innovation Schools and will be official Innovation Schools when they earn IB authorization. Source: PEIMS district database (10/31/17).

Public School Choice Survey Results

Choice School staff members were asked to complete a PSC survey in April 2018. Ninety-four percent of respondents (N=392) described the professional development they received as helpful. The majority (84%) would recommend a position working at their school to others. Most indicated that students benefited academically (81%) as well as socially and emotionally (85%) from their model. The main challenges were demands on teachers' time (N=77) and alignment of the Choice model to district and state requirements (N=70).

District Climate Survey Results

The 2017-18 Climate Survey was administered to all Dallas ISD campus professional and support staff in the fall and spring. It included six scales: 1) Beliefs and Priorities, 2) Positive Culture and Environment, 3) Culture of Feedback and Support, 4) College-Going Culture, 5) Teacher-Teacher Trust, and 6) Principal-Teacher Trust. District Climate Survey results for spring varied for each Transformation School, but were positive for the most part.

All five Transformation Schools and the district had over 70 percent positive ratings on the Beliefs and Priorities, College-Going Culture, Teacher-Teacher Trust, and Principal-Teacher Trust scales whereas the percentages varied more for the Positive Culture and Environment and Culture of Feedback and

Support scales. Innovation School results for spring were positive overall and varied by campus. The spring ratings for Cabell, De Zavala, Franklin, Lipscomb, Preston Hollow, Rogers, and Weiss were higher than the district for all six scales.

District Student Experience Survey Results

The 2017-18 Student Experience Survey was administered to students in grades three to 12 during the week of April 23 to 27, 2018. The survey addressed five areas: 1) classroom environment, 2) expectations and rigor, 3) pedagogical effectiveness, 4) student engagement, and 5) supportive relationships. Students were asked to complete surveys for two of their teachers.

The district's Student Experience Survey results showed elementary Choice School student responses were more positive than secondary Choice School student responses. Results of the grades three to five survey varied by campus, but were positive overall. Across elementary Choice Schools, the percentages of positive responses for all five scales were highest for Rogers and lowest for Mata, Weiss, and R. Lee. The secondary Choice Schools' percentages of positive ratings were highest for IDEA, Hulcy STEAM, and Adams on all five scales and lowest for Marsh and Franklin.

Choice Student Outcome Results

TerraNova, *SUPERA*, and *STAAR* results varied by Choice campus, grade level, and subject area, but were generally positive. Attendance rates for most Choice Schools were higher than the district in 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18. Additionally, while more than 11 percent of Dallas ISD students were identified for chronic absenteeism in 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18, 9.7 percent of Choice students were chronically absent in 2015-16, 6.5 percent in 2016-17, and 8.2 percent in 2017-18. Fewer discipline referrals were reported for 2017-18 than in 2016-17 for both the district and Choice Schools. Most referrals were Level II and the least were Level IV. Reported offenses varied by campus.

Recommendations

- **Continue offering professional development opportunities targeted at Choice model implementation.** Per PSC survey results, Choice teachers requested guidance as they worked to maintain fidelity to the Choice model while also meeting district and state requirements.
- **Support district and campus administrators in the hiring of Choice faculty.** Interviews with

administrators indicated a desire to personalize the application process for Choice teachers to hire the best applicants and to monitor the turnover of Choice faculty.

- **Work to align Choice models to district and state expectations.** PSC survey results and interviews with campus and district administrators revealed concerns over pressure to maintain fidelity to the Choice model while also meeting state and district expectations.

References

Sanguras, L.Y. (2016). Evaluation of Public School Choice Transformation and Innovation Schools: Final report 2015-16. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

Sanguras, L.Y. (2017). 2016-17 Evaluation of Public School Choice. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2017-18 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

© 2018 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 Service Center
2909 N. Buckner Blvd.
Box 10
Dallas, TX 75228