

Parent Frequently Asked Questions: Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI)



1. How can parents learn more about TEI?

More information about TEI can be found at www.dallasisd.org/tei. The Web site has a wealth of resources for the system as a whole as well as its specific components. If you have TEI-related questions, please contact tei@dallasisd.org or (972) 749-5712. Additionally, if you would like a presentation about TEI at a PTA or other parent meeting during January or February, please email family@dallasisd.org.

2. There's a lot of questions about the implementation of TEI. If the results of TEI this year aren't what the district expects, will TEI be discontinued?

TEI is a comprehensive system because it was designed to take into account the many different types of classes and classrooms in Dallas ISD. It is also intended to be a continuous improvement model, meaning that the district is constantly looking at ways to strengthen and improve the system. District TEI staff and administrators meet regularly with principals, assistant principals, and teachers to receive feedback on TEI and that feedback is incorporated into the system to make it stronger. TEI is currently on track to be successfully implemented on schedule and is the Board-approved teacher evaluation system.

3. When will we know what level of effectiveness a teacher has earned under TEI?

Teachers will receive their effectiveness level in September 2015. However, because teacher evaluations are confidential by state law, the effectiveness level of individual teachers cannot be shared with anyone besides the teacher.

4. My student's teacher is not eligible for the Distinguished Teacher Review process. Does that mean he or she is not an effective teacher?

If your student's teacher is not eligible for the Distinguished Teacher Review (DTR) process, that does not mean they are an ineffective teacher. DTR eligible teachers are considered among the most effective in the district; however the vast majority of the district's teachers are effective teachers even if they are not part of the DTR process. About 25% of district teachers were not eligible for DTR because they do not have enough years of experience to qualify. Additionally, the DTR process is voluntary and requires additional work on the part of the teacher. Therefore, some teachers who would have been eligible may opt not to participate.

5. If no new teachers are eligible for the Distinguished Teacher Review process, why were they hired by the district? If they are not among the best, why should we want them teaching our children?

New teachers are not able to go through the DTR process, as it requires teachers to be in their third year of service. However, that does not mean they are ineffective teachers. Dallas ISD actively recruits and screens teaching candidates based on factors that indicate they will be successful teachers. It is our goal to build and support all of our teachers to be their best. Each year, teachers who are Proficient I or higher and have the required years of service will have the opportunity to apply to undergo the Distinguished Teacher Review.

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- 6. Why is there so much test preparation? Do students really need to be pulled out of class for additional instruction that others in the same class are not getting? Shouldn't all students get the same instruction?**

Good instruction is the most important way that teachers help students grow academically and every student should receive high quality instruction every day. Good instruction is always more effective than test preparation, particularly test preparation that occurs at the expense of other classes. We recognize that students learn the same concept in different ways and at different paces and so some students may require additional instruction in order to master the concepts being taught. However, time spent on test preparation should be very minimal.

- 7. Why are schools having so many practice tests? Shouldn't they be focused on learning the material instead of taking tests on it?**

Practice tests are a decision that is made at the campus level. The district does not require any practice tests to be given. The district expects campuses to ensure that the emphasis is on high quality instruction, not on practice tests.

- 8. Who writes the Assessment of Course Performance (ACP) exams that students take at the end of each semester?**

Each summer, Dallas ISD teachers are hired to write questions for the ACPs for their grade level and content area. Those questions are reviewed and edited by staff members in the Departments of Evaluation and Assessment and Teaching and Learning who are experts in their respective fields.

- 9. Why is it necessary for students, especially in lower grades, to take ACPs in Art, Music, and Physical Education, other than to use the ACP scores to evaluate teachers?**

The State of Texas has established a set of standards, called the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), which specify what students are supposed to know and be able to do in each subject area, including art, music, and P.E., in each grade level, Kindergarten through 12th grade. The ACPs are used to measure whether or not students are on track to have mastered the appropriate TEKS and provide useful information about how well a student is progressing. ACP scores form a relatively small part of a teacher's evaluation score and would exist whether or not the results were included in teacher evaluations.

- 10. Can parents decide to not have their children take exams, such as the ACPs, that are not required by the State of Texas even though they are part of a teacher's evaluation?**

A taskforce will begin meeting in January to review the district ACPs, particularly the elementary art, music, and P.E. ACPs, and how they might be improved. The taskforce, which will include parents, exemplary teachers, principals, and others will make recommendations to the administration regarding ACPs. One of the charges of the taskforce will be to consider and make a recommendation regarding an "opt-out" policy for non-state mandated tests.