

Accelerating Campus Excellence Plan (ACE)

A plan to equitably distribute effective teachers and principals

School transformation requires three foundational elements: strong school leadership, effective teachers, and high expectations for both students and staff. That’s why one of the key goals of Destination 2020 is “placing an effective teacher in front of every student,” and Dallas ISD continues to have a relentless focus on improving the quality of instruction and growing the capacity of both our campus leadership teams and our teachers. When it comes to school transformation, the larger the percentage of effective teachers in the school, the greater the chance of turning the school around.

In the 2014-2015 school year, Dallas ISD began implementing the Teacher Excellence Initiative, an evaluation system that ties student achievement results and compensation to teacher evaluations. More important, the new evaluation system more clearly defines what it means for a teacher to be distinguished, proficient, or progressing. For the first time in the history of Dallas ISD we will identify our most effective teachers through a differentiated evaluation system.

It is not enough to just identify our effective teachers. We have to use the results to differentiate professional development and support our staff in realizing their potential as educators. We must also find a way to bring about a more equitable distribution of effective teachers across the District to ensure that they are working with the students who need them the most.

We will ensure a more equitable distribution of effective teachers across the District.

The current distribution

Across America, schools challenged by poverty or low proficiency levels have the lowest percentage of effective teachers.¹ This has contributed to the great and enduring difficulty in closing the achievement gap and raising college ready rates. In Dallas, three years of classroom observations by campus and district leaders show that we too have an inequitable distribution of effective teachers.

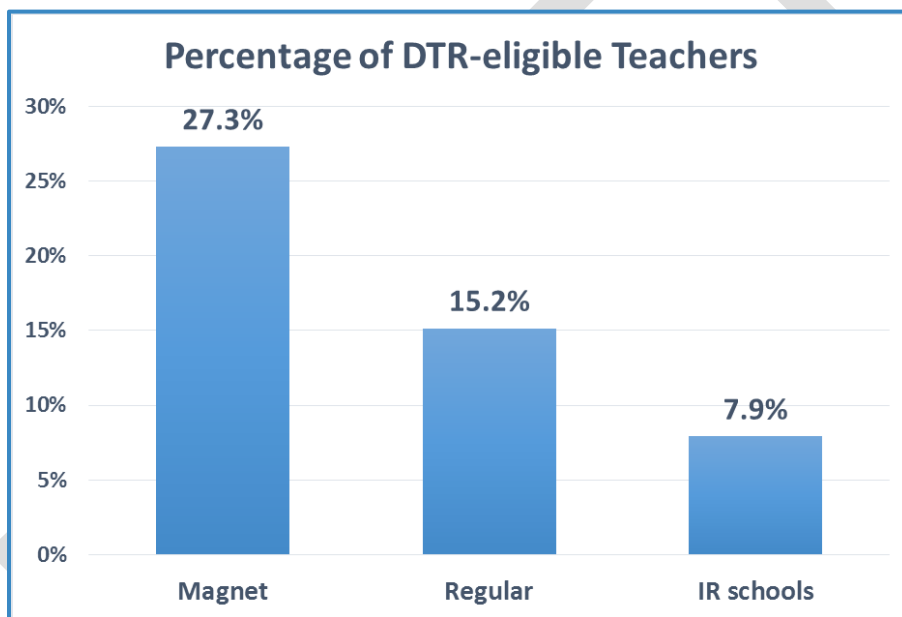
Early indications from the Distinguished Teacher Review process support this claim of inequity and reveal that our struggling campuses have the smallest percentage of DTR-eligible teachers² when compared with all Dallas ISD schools.

¹ See for example NCEE Evaluation Brief, *Do Disadvantaged Students Get Less Effective Teaching?*, January 2014.

² DTR-eligible teachers are those teachers who were selected and evaluated by their principals as the schools’ most effective teachers. Teachers who met the minimum performance level for effectiveness were then invited to undergo a “distinguished teacher review.”

This does not diminish the work of the teachers on our struggling campuses who are doing a great job and getting results; however, the overall percentage of effective teachers is lower on those campuses. While the actual distribution of effective teachers will not be known until the end of this first year of TEI, we already have some data as to where our “distinguished-eligible” teachers are teaching.

In December 2014, Dallas ISD principals identified 1,477 teachers as their most effective and eligible to apply to undergo a district-level review of their effectiveness (the Distinguished Teacher Review – or DTR – process). An analysis of where these DTR-eligible teachers are teaching confirmed what we knew through general observation: our struggling campuses, particularly the campuses that have not met state accountability targets, have the smallest percentage of DTR-eligible teachers.



The chart above shows that a regular Dallas ISD school has nearly twice the number of distinguished-eligible teachers. Magnet schools have over three times the number. The actual percentage of distinguished teachers and that of “Proficient” teachers will most likely reflect similar inequities.

Incentivizing movement

We can act now on a limited scale to move toward a more equitable distribution of effective teachers. Before the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, we will encourage effective teachers and principals to choose to serve at one of a limited number (six) of the Improvement Required (IR) campuses by offering incentives.

But what will it take to get an effective teacher or principal to move to a significantly troubled and underperforming campus in an urban setting? And how many effective teachers need to move to a school in order for that school to turn around?

In preliminary discussions about this topic, teachers and principals shared what they believed were important considerations staff members would take into account when deciding whether to move to a challenging school:

- Movement from a current assignment to a struggling school should be the personal choice of a staff member. In other words, they need to volunteer.
- The monetary incentive should be substantial – at least \$10,000 for a teacher. However, a monetary incentive alone would not be enough.
- Distinguished teachers will join a struggling campus if they believe they can help create a culture of high achievement and high expectations. They want to be part of a group of teachers with the will and ability to turn around a school.
- Given that establishing effective systems and beginning to grow student proficiency takes time, teachers and principals want evaluation rates to be frozen for the first couple of years of a transformation. Protecting evaluation ratings for two years seems fair.
- Similarly, teachers and principals believe they are taking a huge risk going to an IR school and recommend some sort of guarantee, such as an extended contract, that they will not lose their teaching positions as a result of choosing to teach in a “turnaround” environment.
- Struggling campuses do have some effective and distinguished teachers already. In order to retain these teachers at these campuses, distinguished and proficient teachers at the IR campuses should receive incentives to stay.
- To turn around a school, that school should be “fully reconstituted” by first retaining DTR-eligible teachers as well as other effective teachers who successfully reapply for their positions and then building out the staff with DTR-eligible teachers from across the District. Most progressing teachers who are



moved off the campus should be given the opportunity to apply for other jobs elsewhere in the District.

The DISD Plan: Accelerating Campus Excellence (ACE)

For the 2015-2016 school year, Dallas ISD will encourage and support DTR-eligible teachers and some of our most effective principals to move to struggling campuses. This is a pilot program and includes six IR campuses. These campuses will be identified by the end of March. Assistant principals, counselors, and campus instructional coaches will also receive incentives to serve at an ACE school. Once these campuses have been identified, the District will provide the following incentives to DTR-eligible teachers, principals, and other staff to relocate to these schools:³

- Selected principals of the ACE schools will receive a \$15,000 stipend.⁴ Selected assistant principals will receive \$13,500.
- Selected teachers who earn a distinguished TEI effectiveness level (Exemplary I, Proficient III, and Proficient II) will receive a \$12,000 stipend.⁵
- The ACE schools will be fully reconstituted, though DTR-eligible teachers will be allowed to remain at the school. All other teachers will have to reapply.⁶ Teachers who are selected and ultimately choose to teach at an ACE school will receive a “signing bonus” of \$2,000 in September, followed by a December and May payout (amount to be determined based on 2014-2015 effectiveness level – see details below). Teachers who stay at the ACE campus in 2016-2017 will receive a retention stipend in three similar payouts (amount to be determined based on 2015-2016 effectiveness level).



³ ACE stipends will be provided over and above any salary cap as defined by TEI. See chart on page 5 for a complete list of the ACE monetary incentives.

⁴ This stipend will be paid out in three installments: one payment in September for \$2,000; one in December for \$6,500; and one in May for \$6,500. Should a principal leave his assignment prior to the end of the semester, the amount to be returned to the District will be determined pro rata.

⁵ The staff stipends will also be paid out in three installments: one payment in September for \$2,000; one in December for half the difference of the total ACE stipend less the signing bonus (\$2,000); and one in May for the same amount as the December payout. Should a teacher leave his assignment prior to the end of the semester, the amount to be returned to the District will be determined pro rata.

⁶ The decision of whether or not to retain the reapplying teacher will fall to the Executive Director, current (outgoing) principal, and ACE (incoming) principal.

- To the greatest extent possible, the District will assemble cohorts of at least 30 DTR-eligible teachers (or a number approximating 85% of the classroom teaching staff) in a cohort to move to an ACE school.
- All school teachers who receive a distinguished evaluation rating during the 2014-2015 school year, including those who teach at ACE schools, will receive a two-year contract extension. All school principals, who receive a distinguished evaluation rating during the 2014-2015 school year will also will also receive a two-year contract extension.⁷

Role	ACE Stipend (Total Sum)	Payout #1 Signing Bonus (Sep. 2015)	Payout #2 (Dec. 2015)	Payout #3 (May 2016)
Principal	\$15,000	\$2,000	\$6,500	\$6,500
Assistant Principal	\$13,500	\$2,000	\$5,750	\$5,750
Counselor*	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Campus Instructional Coach*	\$8,000	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Distinguished Teacher	\$12,000	\$2,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Proficient Teacher	\$10,000	\$2,000	\$4,000	\$4,000
Progressing Teacher	\$8,000	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000

**Dollar amounts listed here subject to change, pending input from district advisory groups (e.g., the Teacher Focus Group)*

- ACE teachers and principals who have a Proficient I or higher rating may keep that rating (and the points associated with that rating) for the following two years.
- ACE teachers and principals will attend school/team staff development from 5 August through 11 August.
- ACE leadership teams, including the administrative staff (i.e., principal and AP) as well as teacher leaders, will participate in a series of Saturday Design Studios in May and June to 1) develop a campus vision, 2) design the campus staff and student culture, and 3) conduct action planning for the 2015-2016 school year.
- The District will select no more than three effective teachers or 20% of the number of DTR-eligible teachers on a campus, whichever is higher, from any one school in the District to serve in the ACE schools. Any campus with 5 or fewer DTR-eligible teachers has a cap of two teachers, who will be allowed to work at an ACE

⁷ All school principals, who receive a Proficient I evaluation rating will receive a one-year extension.

school. A principal of a campus (non-ACE campus) may waive the cap on teacher transfers to ACE schools.⁸

More on stipends

ACE principals will still be eligible for administrator experience and size of school stipends; however, they will no longer be eligible for the \$5,000 Tier 1 school stipend (as the ACE stipend replaces that). ACE stipends will be awarded on top of any evaluation system cap.

For ACE campuses that are also I2020 campuses, the ACE stipends will replace all I2020 stipends (i.e., ACE teachers on an I2020 campus will just receive the ACE stipend, not the ACE stipend plus the I2020 stipend.)

ACE teachers who are also bilingual teachers, will continue to receive the bilingual stipends. Athletic coaches will also receive the relevant stipends. Other stipends are under review by a task force being led by Human Capital Management; it will determine any other stipends ACE teachers may receive.

Raising expectations

It is time to take this critical first step in ensuring the equitable distribution of high performing teachers throughout Dallas ISD.

In addition to a strong leadership team and effective teachers, a turn-around school needs staff members, students, and parents to have high expectations.

As we are selecting teachers and campus leaders who are distinguished or highly effective, we know that the expectations for the quality of instruction will be high. The principals and staffs at the ACE schools will establish challenging, but attainable, goals for student achievement. The expectation is that these schools will see significant academic improvement in just one year.



⁸ The Chief of School Leadership or Superintendent may also waive the cap in unique situations as determined by the Chief of School Leadership.

More relevant time on task is expected as the school day will be extended by one hour. Additionally, staff members will receive considerable professional development on teamwork, change management, professionalism, and developing student habits of mind. Each teacher must also agree to spend an additional three hours a week (before or after school or on Saturday) supporting additional instructional time or monitoring student homework time. This will be arranged individually with the principal.

Raising expectations for student performance and achievement may be the most difficult part of the ACE strategy. The following steps will be taken in order to help the ACE schools establish and meet higher expectations.

- The ACE school will require a parent-student-school contract that will include the following expectations:
 - Students will be required to strictly adhere to a uniform policy. The school will provide the school attire if a family is not in a position to purchase the uniform.
 - Students are expected to maintain good attendance (at least 95% attendance rate) and be on time to school and to class.
 - The school day at ACE schools will be extended by one hour.
 - Students can expect approximately 90 minutes of homework every evening. The school will remain open until 6:00 p.m. in order for students to do their homework should they wish to remain at school. Dinner will be provided.

ACE schools will accept no failing grades. Teachers will provide additional instruction and students will retake assessments or redo assignments until they have a passing grade.

- ACE schools will accept no failing grades. Teachers will provide additional instruction and students will retake assessments or redo assignments until they have a passing grade. Additional instruction will include Saturday school.
- ACE schools will help students build “habits of mind” in order to strengthen character and improve behavior. ACE middle schools will offer

Turning Point, a remedial program for students who fail to meet minimum expectations for behavior and habits of mind.

- If parents do not want their child to attend an ACE school, transportation to another district-selected school will be provided. That other school will not be an ACE school, nor will it be an Improvement Required (IR) school.⁹

The costs

To reconstitute an ACE school and incentivize a campus leadership team and teachers to move to that school will cost an average of \$455,000 for each school.

2015-16 ACE Stipend Budget -- sample		
Role	Stipend	School staff (36 teachers)
Principal	\$ 15,000	1
Assistant Principal	\$ 13,500	1
Counselor	\$ 10,000	1
CIC	\$ 8,000	3
Distinguished Teacher	\$ 12,000	25
Proficient Teacher	\$ 10,000	7
Progressing Teacher	\$ 8,000	4
Total Stipend Cost/Campus		\$464,500

Additionally, there will be increased professional development and some program costs amounting to \$300,000. Thus to implement the ACE plan for next year, the District would have to invest \$3,030,000 for six schools.

⁹ The District actually provides such transportation already for all schools on the “PEG” list, which includes our IR schools.