

An Analysis of the ACE Campuses
An Investigation into ACE Campuses
Versus Similar Campuses Achievement

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Executive Summary

Examining the exit grades of grade 5 and grade 8 for elementary and middle schools, respectively, both Accelerating Campus Excellence campuses, ACE, and Intensive Support Network campuses, ISN, had improvements in both math and reading in grade 5 after implementation of their programs started. ACE elementary school success in reading and mathematics is defined mostly by two campuses, Mills and Blanton. Blanton had tremendous success in mathematics where the average fifth grade student had a math score that performed as well as 20% of the students in the state in 2015 before the program started and as well as 80% of the students in the state in 2017 after two years of implementation. However the fact that in 5 of the 7 ACE campuses the performance of students did not exceed the performance of similar ISN campuses to any meaningful extent suggests it is premature to attribute ACE success due to the movement of so-called highly effective TEI teachers to the ACE campuses. Indeed, this study suggests the Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) may be unreliable in its classification of teachers.

The results of both ACE and ISN campuses compared to other Improvement Required, IR, campuses indicate extra resources have an impact on student performance at these low performing campuses

Like almost all past reform efforts in Dallas ISD, meaningful improvement is often found at selective elementary campuses but student progress is rarely sustained in the middle school. Analysis of sustained elementary student performance into middle school is possible and in the near future this needs to be investigated.

While the reliable identification of highly effective teachers through the Teacher Excellence Initiative, TEI, is not supported in this analysis, it is clear that the results at Mills and Blanton are stunning and factors that lead to this high performance need to be better understood.

Retrospective analysis of why both the ACE and ISN campuses had dips in achievement in 2014 and 2015 not seen at other IR campuses should be determined. Much of the improvement at ACE and ISN campuses is both recovery and additional improvement.

Background

The Dallas Independent School District, DISD, has a long history of intervention programs for high poverty, low performing campuses including such programs as the Federal Court Ordered Learning Centers, School Centered Education, the Edison Schools Project, The Urban Systemic Initiative (USI), Imagine 2020, and currently the ACE program and the Intensive Support Network (ISN) programs. One

common theme across most of the earlier programs was that achievement gains seen in the elementary grades were rarely sustained in the middle school. Another common theme was that pockets of excellence in elementary campuses were identified but could never be replicated. Third, the Learning Centers and the Edison Schools Project paid extra salaries to teachers who were identified as exemplary but the association of teacher exemplary status and student performance was never verified with data.

Today DISD has two intervention programs, the ACE Program and the Intensive Support Network. Both programs provide extra resources to select campuses rated as Improvement Required (IR) by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) or deemed in danger of IR status. The ACE campuses have the additional feature of transferring highly effective teachers to these campuses and a longer school day. These highly effective teachers have been given a higher teaching salary. The rationale is that the neediest students should have the best teachers and if monetary incentive is required to attract these teachers then that is a well justified cost for improving the outcomes of these students and the improvement of these high poverty communities. The schools in the study are listed below.

ACE campuses	ISN campuses	Other IR campuses
Billy Earl Dade MS	T W Browne MS	Thomas C Marsh MS
Sarah Zumwalt MS	Edward H Cary MS	Thomas J Rusk MS
Thomas A Edison MS	Oliver Wendell Holmes MS	Harold Wendell Lang MS
Blanton ES	Boude Storey MS	Kennedy-Curry MS
Umphrey Lee ES	J W Ray LC	Barbara M Manns MS
Roger Q Mills ES	C F Carr ES	Gabe P Allen ES
Elisha M Pease ES	Daniel Webster ES	John W Carpenter ES
	Paul L Dunbar LC	J N Ervin ES
	Edward Titche ES	Albert Sidney Johnston ES
	John Neely Bryan ES	William B Miller ES
	George W Carver LC	Mount Auburn ES
	Maria Moreno ES	John F Peeler ES
	Wilmer-Hutchins ES	San Jacinto El
	Rufus C Burleson ES	George W Truett ES
	Ronald E McNair ES	Onesimo Hernandez ES
	Mark Twain ES	Eduardo Mata ES
	Nancy J Cochran ES	Leonides Gonzales ES
	Oran M Roberts ES	

Study Limitations

This study attempts to use publically available aggregate data from the Texas Education Agency to measure growth. Measuring growth with aggregate data is problematic and ideally the growth of a cohort of individual students who had consistent treatment intervention should be analyzed but that information is not publically available. There are a number of ways to measure growth with aggregate data. One method is to note the change in the percent of students passing a cut point, such as the percent of students reaching MEETS STANDARD. This analysis only shows the growth of students crossing the cut point and ignores those students above and below the cut point who grew or declined

in achievement but never moved across the cut point threshold. Another way to measure growth is to use an average scale score. In this type of analysis all students are included in the summary and if the assessments are aligned across years averages can be compared. The STAAR test developers have aligned the scale scores across years so a scale score one year has the same measure of ability the next year. Unfortunately, scale scores have little conceptual meaning to the general public. Therefore, this study presents average scale scores but also maps these averages to the state frequency distribution tables for the assessment to estimate the rank of that scale score average relative to the students in the entire state.

Results

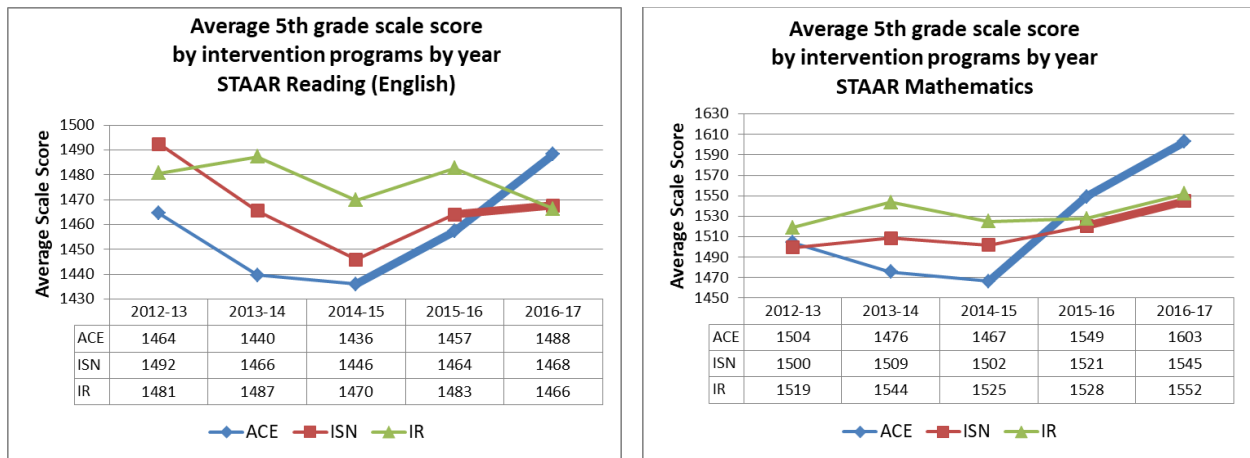


Figure 1. Average scale score performance of 5th grade students in ACE and ISN programs

Figure 1 shows that for both reading and mathematics the ACE campuses had tremendous performance in 2017 exceeding both the ISN and other IR campuses. The ISN schools have also improved but in a less dramatic manner. The reader should observe caution as the average scale score difference in reading between ACE and ISN campuses in 2017 is about one more item correct. However, the difference in fifth grade math performance of ACE versus ISN campuses represents approximately four more items correct. It should also be noted that in reading the ACE campuses and the ISN campuses dropped in performance in 2013-14 and 2014-15 and much of the current gains are due to recovery of past performance.

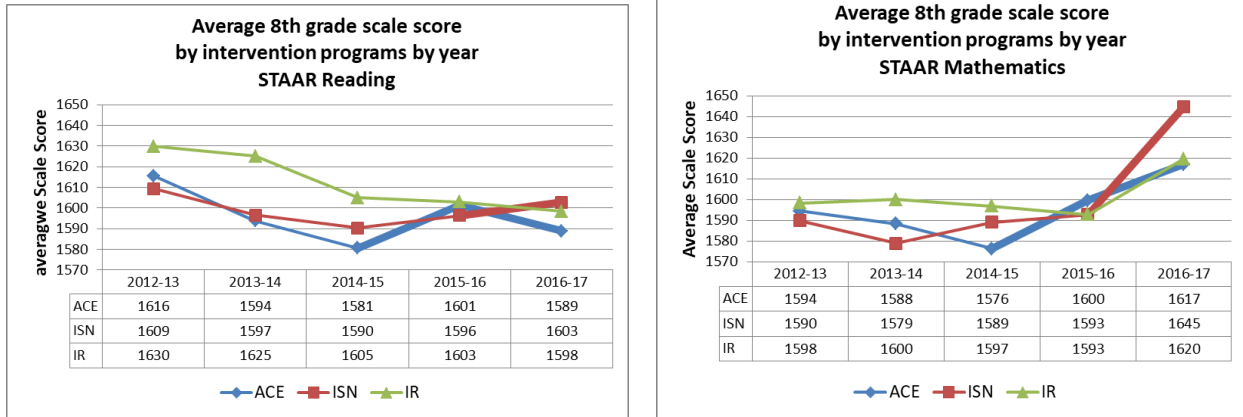


Figure 2. Average scale score performance of 8th grade students in ACE and ISN programs

Middle school performance in reading has declined over the past four years for ACE, ISN and the other IR campuses and reading performance has been relatively flat for the past three years for all campuses in the chart above. In 8th grade mathematics the ACE campuses have grown in achievement the past two years but the ISN schools have grown more in 2017 and the other IR campuses have kept pace. The difference between a scale score of 1645 for ISN and 1617 for ACE is a little more than two more items correct.

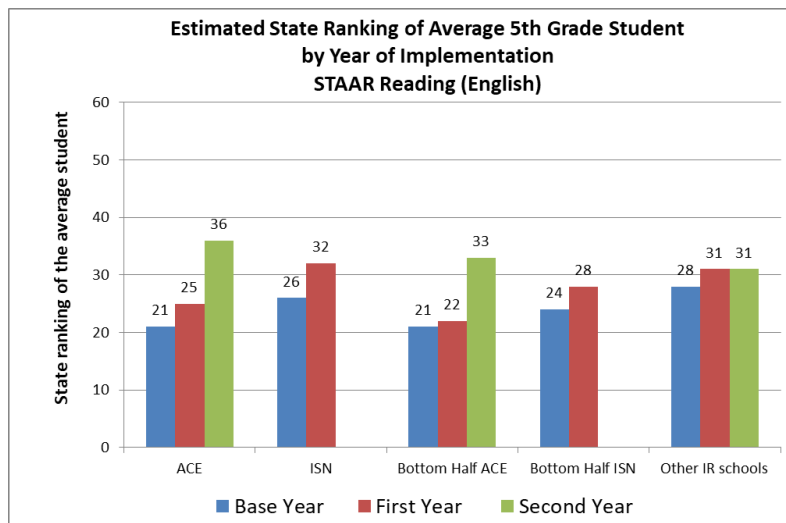


Figure 3. State ranking of average fifth grade Reading scale score based on year of implementation

Figure 3 shows the state ranking of the average student. For example, in the base year the average fifth grade ACE student performed as well as 21% of the students in the state. These numbers are obviously very low for all groups. The reader is encouraged to examine the data tables in the Appendix to see the performance of students in special campuses like magnets and single sex schools or those not IR in the recent past (other) campuses. Figure 3 shows that for 5th grade reading, both ACE and ISN campuses have made similar improvements after the first year of implementation. This improvement extends

down into the bottom performing campuses of both groups. The relative performance of the other IR campuses was flat.

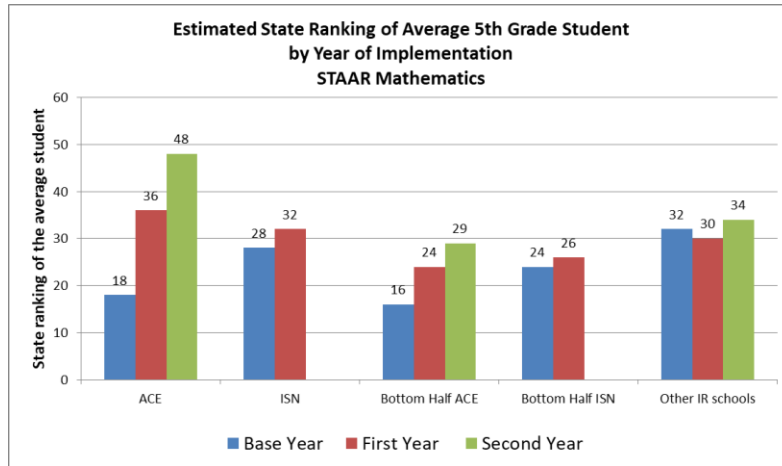


Figure 4. State ranking of average fifth grade Mathematic scale score based on year of implementation

Figure 4 shows that similar to the scale score reading results the ACE campuses are making tremendous progress in 5th grade mathematics and the ISN campuses are making meaningful progress. Comparing the results of the lower half of schools of each group the results imply most of the growth in mathematics is with the top two campuses. Therefore, an analysis of each campus follows.

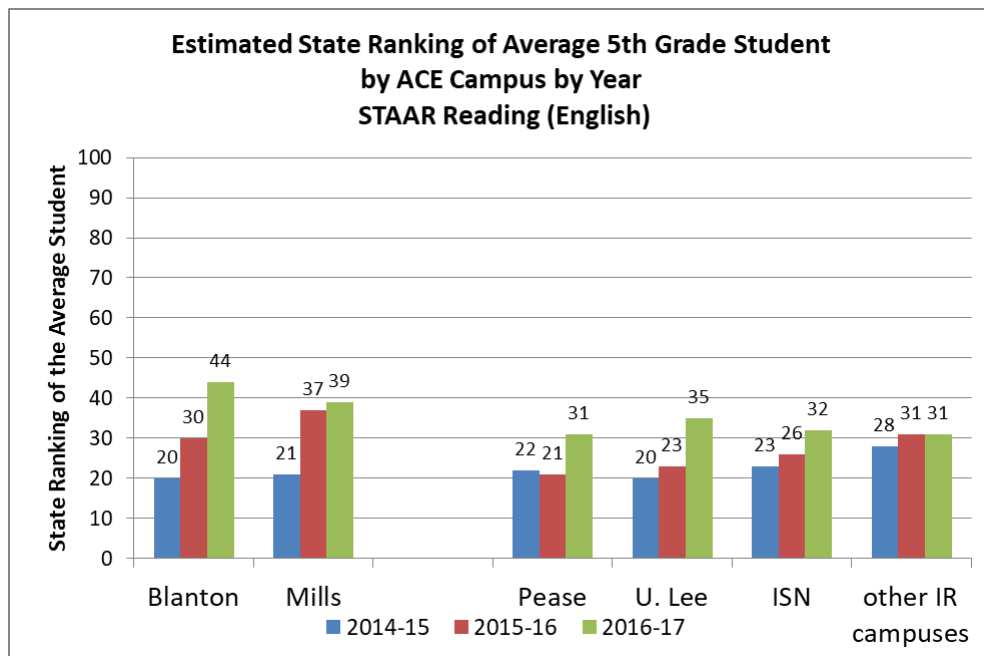


Figure 5. Estimated state ranking of average 5th grade student on STAAR Reading by ACE campus.

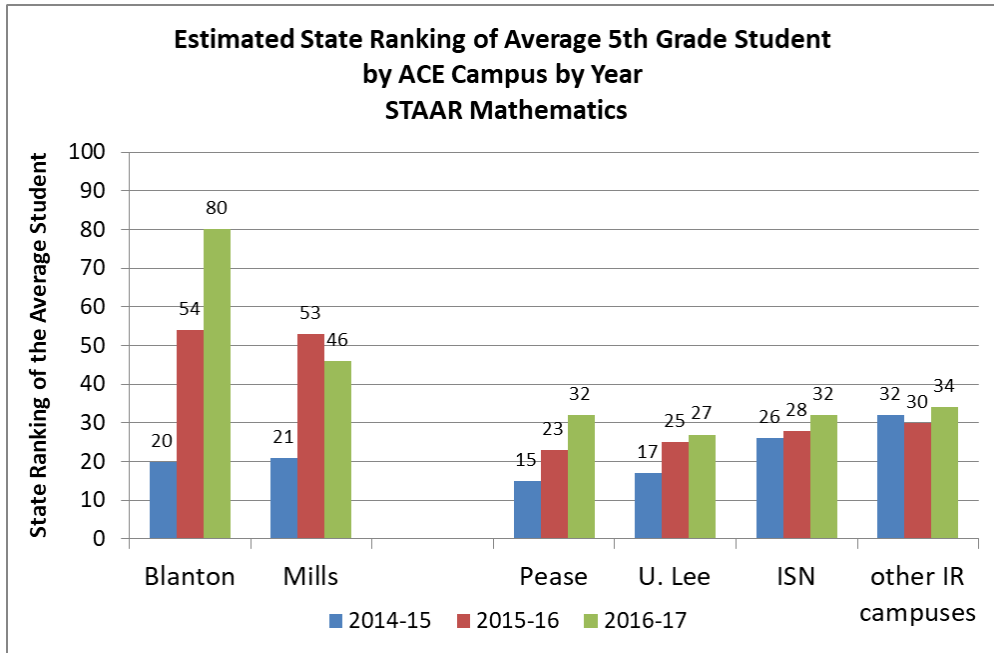


Figure 6. Estimated state ranking of average 5th grade student on STAAR Mathematics by ACE campus.

In reading the ISN campuses matched the comparative performance of U. Lee and Pease but Blanton and Mills had slightly elevated performance. In mathematics, the performance of the ISN campuses also matched the performance of U. Lee and Pease but the performance of Blanton and Mills far exceeded other campuses. Clearly, the outstanding performance of the ACE campuses in fifth grade mathematics, and to a lesser extent fifth grade reading, is due to the performance at Blanton and Mills. The issue is not whether ACE is outperforming ISN at the 5th grade level but what practices at Blanton and Mills have made them so outstanding. The average 5th grade math student at Blanton performed as well as 20 percent of the students in Texas in 2015 and now performs as well as 80 percent of the students in Texas in 2017.

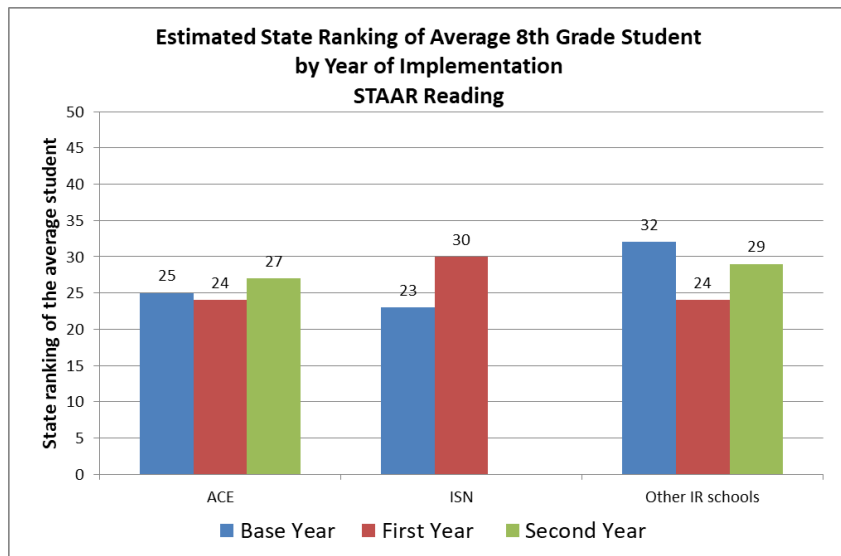


Figure 7. State ranking of average eighth grade Reading scale score based on year of implementation.

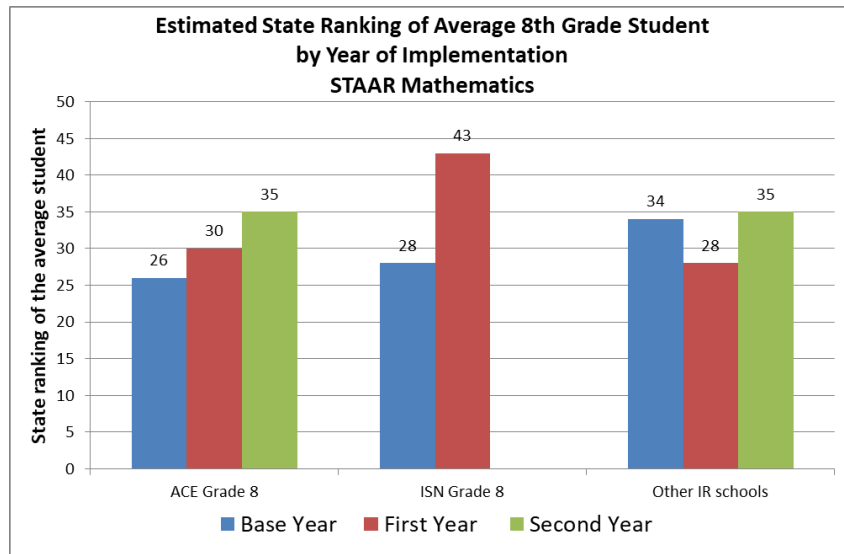


Figure 8. State ranking of average eighth grade Math scale score based on year of implementation.

Figure 7 shows that in 8th grade reading, the ACE schools were flat in the rank of an average student after one year of implementation while the average student at the ISN campuses performed as well as 23 percent of the students in the base year compared to 30 percent in the first year. Figure 8 shows that both ACE and ISN campuses made some gains in performance, relative to the state, in grade 8 mathematics. However, the ISN campuses had greater gains. The ACE campuses continued to improve at a rate similar to the other IR campuses. Based on these results and previous charts it is difficult to advocate that the TEI system was accurate in identifying and placing highly effective teachers on ACE campuses.

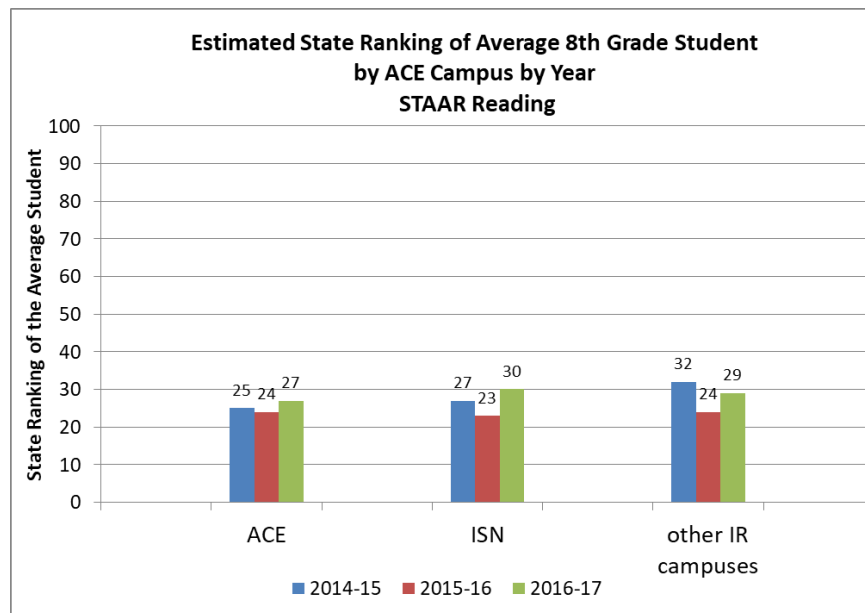


Figure 9. State ranking of average eighth grade reading scale score by year.

Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the estimated state ranking in grade 8 reading and mathematics for both ACE and ISN campuses between 2014-15 and 2016-17. Clearly, the ACE campuses are not exceeding the performance of ISN campuses in grade 8. In grade 8 reading and math, both ACE and ISN campuses showed some improvement over two years while the other IR campuses did not show improvement.

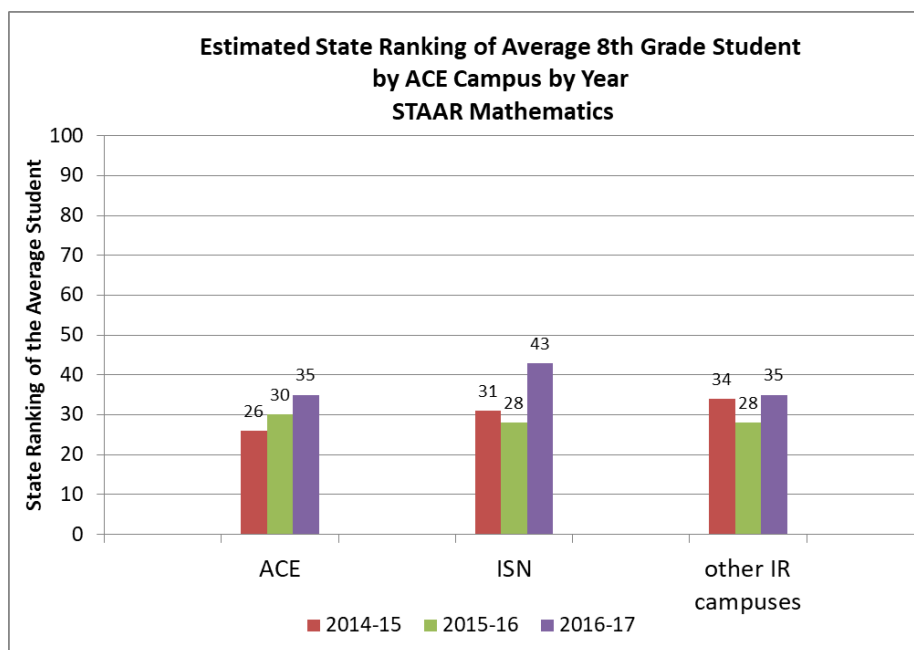


Figure 10. State ranking of average eighth grade mathematics scale score by year.

The results for grade 5 reading in Spanish are presented in the appendix, Table A6. It is difficult to extract meaning on the state rank of a scale score when Dallas ISD represents around 30% of the state population taking the exam. The reader is encouraged to examine Table A6 but not over interpret.

Conclusions

Given the limitations of the aggregate data used by the study and based on the selective performance of grades 5 and 8, the ACE campuses outperformed both ISN and other IR campuses in the elementary setting. In the middle schools, the ISN schools slightly outperformed the ACE campuses in both reading and mathematics. Upon further investigation the success of ACE in the elementary campuses over the ISN campuses is almost entirely defined by the performance of students at Mills and especially Blanton in mathematics. Put another way, 2 out of 7 ACE campuses exceeded the performance of similar ISN campuses. The ACE campuses replaced many teachers with teachers deemed highly effective by the TEI classification system. This study supports extra resources on campus but does not support the accuracy or precision of the TEI classification system of teachers.

Discussion - Data Driven versus Child Driven Cultures when measuring teacher effects

Extra resources matter in the elementary schools as both the ACE and ISN campuses had improved performance compared to similar IR campuses not receiving extra resources. As in past reform movements in Dallas, making an impact on middle schools is very difficult. It is premature to assume the TEI identification of highly effective teachers is reliable for many reasons presented above. Instead, the outstanding performance at Mills Elementary and Blanton Elementary needs to be better understood. It is not too early to track the performance of the students at these two elementary campuses in the middle school to see whether performance is sustained. The fall, 2017 ACP results in 6th grade middle school reading and math could be investigated by which elementary campus sent their students to each middle school. More importantly, a detailed ethnographic study of instructional practices, attitudes, and learning environment at these two campuses should be performed before rolling out ACE beyond Dallas ISD. The District and the business community are touting the success of TEI yet they ignored middle school results and claim teacher retention as a validity measure of TEI when it could be that higher paid teachers tend to remain in the profession. Yet, something is working at two ACE campuses and the solution may not be related to data analysis but to teachers who understand and address the learning needs of their students. It is well known from research that exemplary teachers provide a supportive climate, foster opportunities to learn, teach the intended curriculum with deep understanding, sustain discourse on powerful ideas, present coherent content, allow practice and application of ideas, scaffold student tasks to build understanding, use various types of assessments to monitor progress (not just multiple choice) and have high expectations. It is doubtful that any analysis of multiple choice test data will extract the qualities of a highly effective teacher stated above.

Appendix A

Table A1

Grade 5 Reading English Results by Campus Groups in Dallas ISD

Reading English Grade 5					
test takers	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	234	200	261	218	229
ACE lo	129	123	147	144	145
ISN	831	887	865	853	891
ISN lo	424	408	394	396	397
IR	650	533	556	579	617
Special	59	54	61	59	55
Other	6209	5630	5752	5677	6178
Avg Scale Score	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	1464	1440	1436	1457	1488
ACE lo	1475	1432	1436	1441	1475
ISN	1492	1466	1446	1464	1468
ISN lo	1486	1462	1441	1450	1454
IR	1481	1487	1470	1483	1466
Special	1644	1639	1652	1677	1665
Other	1524	1511	1524	1538	1534
State Mean	1549	1553	1558	1562	1553
State Median	1537	1544	1547	1552	1540
State St.Dev. of Campus Means	51.9	54.3	58.4	58.1	58.1
rank of average	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	27	21	21	25	36
ACE lo	30	19	21	22	33
ISN	36	28	23	26	32
ISN lo	34	27	22	24	28
IR	32	33	28	31	31
Special	81	77	78	82	80
Other	45	39	43	46	48
State Mean	54	53	53	52	54
State Median	50	50	50	50	50
State rank of avg at 1450	23	23	23	23	27

Table A2

Grade 5 Mathematics Results by Campus Groups in Dallas ISD

Math Grade 5					
test takers	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	282	281	317	294	323
ACE lo	132	126	168	159	165
ISN	992	1141	1121	1133	1110
ISN lo	505	511	492	510	478
IR	855	745	764	781	829
Special	59	54	61	60	55
Other	8929	8970	9018	9068	9494
Avg Scale Score	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	1504	1476	1467	1549	1603
ACE lo	1505	1508	1458	1500	1533
ISN	1500	1509	1502	1521	1545
ISN lo	1487	1517	1487	1499	1522
IR	1519	1544	1525	1528	1552
Special	1649	1645	1672	1692	1694
Other	1547	1559	1574	1590	1613
State Mean	1590	1601	1599	1609	1626
State Median	1574	1588	1588	1596	1611
State St.Dev. of Campus Means	67.0	63.8	62.4	63.6	65.7
rank of average	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	31	20	18	36	48
ACE lo	31	27	16	24	29
ISN	30	27	26	28	32
ISN lo	27	29	24	24	26
IR	35	37	32	30	34
Special	70	66	74	76	72
Other	42	40	46	48	51
State Mean	55	54	54	54	57
State Median	50	50	50	50	50
State rank of avg at 1500	30	25	26	24	22

Table A3

Grade 8 Reading Results by Campus Groups in Dallas ISD

Reading English Grade 8					
Test Takers	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	433	607	514	501	574
ISN	825	930	930	839	816
IR	1159	1052	1177	1189	1092
Special	532	635	757	762	560
Other	6154	6401	6715	6317	6495
Avg Scale Score	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	1616	1594	1581	1601	1589
ISN	1609	1597	1590	1596	1603
IR	1630	1625	1605	1603	1598
Special	1802	1797	1793	1784	1766
Other	1649	1642	1631	1641	1624
State Mean	1684	1684	1675	1684	1676
State Median	1676	1673	1663	1683	1671
State St.Dev. of Campus Means	52.5	53.8	56.2	53.5	57.1
rank of average	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	30	24	25	24	27
ISN	28	23	27	23	30
IR	34	24	32	24	29
Special	86	85	84	85	79
Other	41	36	39	36	36
State Mean	53	53	53	51	52
State Median	50	50	50	50	50

Table A4

Grade 8 Mathematics Results by Campus Groups in Dallas ISD

Math Grade 8					
Test Takers	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	342	522	502	485	563
ISN	657	770	898	790	877
IR	799	892	1108	1080	1096
Special	109	106	802	757	817
Other	4597	5050	6597	6207	6819
Avg Scale Score	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	1594	1588	1576	1600	1617
ISN	1590	1579	1589	1593	1645
IR	1598	1600	1597	1593	1620
Special	1717	1712	1752	1766	1789
Other	1619	1625	1629	1643	1653
State Mean	1662	1676	1658	1674	1682
State Median	1642	1658	1645	1658	1668
State St.Dev. of Campus Means	56.0	60.2	62.8	64.9	71.4
rank of average	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	30	26	26	30	35
ISN	28	22	31	28	43
IR	32	30	34	28	35
Special	73	67	82	81	82
Other	40	38	45	45	46
State Mean	56	56	55	55	54
State Median	50	50	50	50	50

Table A5

Grade 5 Reading and Mathematics Results by ACE Campus

Grade 5 Reading (English) ACE Campuses					
Avg Scale Score	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Blanton	1447	1424	1434	1480	1517
U. Lee	1508	1398	1430	1447	1484
Mills	1455	1483	1438	1505	1499
Pease	1430	1459	1442	1436	1466
rank of average	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Blanton	22	18	20	30	44
U. Lee	40	13	20	23	35
Mills	25	32	21	37	39
Pease	18	26	22	21	31

Grade 5 Math (English) ACE Campuses					
Avg Scale Score	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Blanton	1517	1514	1475	1608	1720
U. Lee	1542	1424	1462	1505	1524
Mills	1486	1493	1478	1605	1595
Pease	1454	1465	1453	1495	1545
rank of average	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Blanton	34	29	20	54	80
U. Lee	41	11	17	25	27
Mills	27	24	21	53	46
Pease	19	18	15	23	32

Table A6

Grade 5 Reading Spanish Results by Campus Groups in Dallas ISD

Reading Spanish Grade 5					
Test Takers					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	48	88	64	76	96
ISN	166	258	268	295	232
IR	215	225	223	227	233
Other	2861	3462	3433	3458	3466
State	10785	11873	12518	13006	13763
% of State					
	31%	34%	32%	31%	29%
Avg Scale Score					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	1534	1412	1466	1547	1595
ISN	1522	1503	1499	1499	1570
IR	1522	1504	1498	1499	1548
Other	1529	1530	1542	1561	1582
State Mean	1511	1505	1518	1514	1549
State Median	1502	1489	1501	1501	1538
rank of average					
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
ACE	60	30	40	62	68
ISN	57	54	49	49	60
IR	56	54	49	50	53
Other	59	61	59	65	65
State Mean	52	55	55	53	54
State Median	50	50	50	50	50

About the Authors

Michael Dryden, PhD, has taught middle and high school math and science in the South Pacific, Indonesia, Australia and the U.S. He has a doctorate in Research and Evaluation in Science Education and has evaluated international, national, local programs. He was a principal evaluator in the Dallas ISD for 20 years and evaluated most educational reform programs including Federal Court Ordered Learning Centers, Yale Professor's James Comer's School Development Program called School Centered Education, the Edison Schools Project and the National Science Foundation's Urban Systemic Initiative in Dallas ISD.

Lori Kirkpatrick is a public school graduate, the mother of a Dallas ISD third grader and former Dallas ISD school board candidate. She has seen first-hand how the Teacher Excellence Initiative is hurting DISD teachers and thus has a direct impact on students. She is a long-time physician assistant at Dallas County's Parkland Hospital. This work allowed her to gain a deeper understanding of the economic gap that is present across our district and community and to see the challenges DISD students and families face every single day. You can follow her blog at kirkpatrick4disd.com.