

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^{1,2}. 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.**

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	Removed IR	# Schools Added to IR end of year	# IR Schools Closed end of year
		non-ACE	ACE		
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^{3,4}. 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 campuses⁴.

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 ⁵	\$5.4M ⁶

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

¹ https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/data/reports/2013-14/1A_TAPR-rpt-2013-14.pdf

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

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

⁴ <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.

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

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