



Dallas ISD's ACE Program: Incenting the Equitable Distribution of Effective Teachers to Turn Around Schools and Change Students' Lives



The Bright Spot Series

Why This Matters:

National research shows that teacher effectiveness has the single largest impact on academic growth for students.¹

Executive Summary:

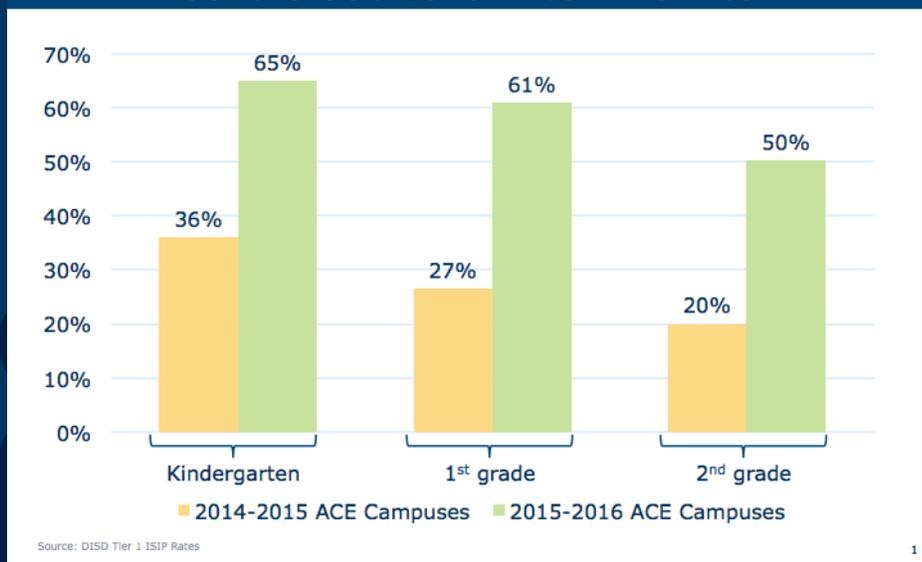
In the 2014-15 school year, DISD had 37 campuses on the "Improvement Required" (IR) list. To help take, and keep, these schools off of the IR list, DISD instituted the "Accelerating Campus Excellence" (ACE) pilot initiative to incent an equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals at the subject multi-year IR campuses. Following year one (2015-16) of the ACE pilot, six of the seven pilot schools were removed from the IR list due to dramatic improvements.

Key Takeaways:

The ACE initiative was designed based on national research surrounding the principle that transforming schools requires strong principal leadership and effective teachers coupled with an environment of high expectations for students and staff. The strategic framework for ACE focuses on five components that were continuously evaluated for effective implementation throughout the 2015-2016 school year. The components were:

- Effective Principals and Teachers
- Instructional Excellence
- Extended Learning
- Social-Emotional Support
- Parent and Community Partnership

30% More ACE Campus Students Reading At Or Above Grade Level After First Year



Data Points:

- 30% more K-2 students on ACE elementary campuses read at or above grade level according to I-Station assessments, doubling the percentage of students at or above level from the year prior.²
- ACE campuses saw gains on 13 of 14 STAAR subject tests with an average gain of 16 percentage points.³
- This is important progress given that students reading on grade level by 3rd grade are four times less likely to drop out of school.⁴
- The initiative cost DISD \$1,180 per student enrolled in ACE schools during the 2015-2016 school year.

What made the ACE Program Successful?

What does it feel like to make significant changes that 'turn around' a school successfully? An ACE campus teacher at Umphrey Lee Elementary School said it best:

"In spite of a lot of hard work, many long hours, and times of feeling extremely overwhelmed, I have observed an amazing positive transformation at Umphrey Lee Elementary School this school year [...] **Teachers are more committed, students are more engaged, and the administration is supportive.** The proof, however, is in the pudding. Thus, increased **student achievement is reflected in improved assessment results.** I am pleased to see these changes, especially in the students. I feel that Umphrey Lee is headed in a better direction and has a very bright future ahead."

Though there is still much work to be done at the seven ACE campuses to ensure student growth continues, the DISD community is celebrating and reflecting on what made year one (2015-16) of the ACE program so successful. When asked

about the most important element that led to the success of ACE so quickly, Jolee Healey, Executive Director of the ACE program, said, “This is really about strong leadership and effective teaching.”

Supporting effective teaching through excellent leadership and strategic compensation.

National research and best practices reflect that talented school leadership and highly effective teachers are essential in successful school turnaround initiatives. To that end, DISD focused on financially incenting some of the district’s more effective teachers and principals into relocating to the campuses of most need, located in the highest poverty communities. Principals were selected based on a track record of student success and positive campus culture, while teachers identified as effective based on the district’s evaluation rubric (Teacher Excellence Initiative, or ‘TEI’) were offered to apply to teach at an ACE campus. However, no more than 4 teachers were allowed to leave any one campus to move to an ACE school in order to minimize any negative impact at the non-IR campuses in the district.

Understanding new ACE staff members would face additional challenges and professional responsibilities, such as an extended school day, educators were offered meaningful stipends in addition to their base pay. Additionally, both teachers and principals were provided with five additional days of professional development at the beginning of the year and with additional PD opportunities provided during the year. Coaching was provided from the ACE program office for principals, assistant principals, teachers, and campus instructional coaches.

A Thomas E. Edison Middle School teacher expressed appreciation for the policies and supports that allowed them to make a significant impact on the students that need it most:

“It is working! ... This was the hardest school year I have ever had, but I cannot forget that there are teachers who are working as hard as I am at campuses similar to mine across our state who get no extra money whatsoever. I am grateful that DISD has been brave enough to create a new model for teacher compensation through ACE and TEI.”

What’s next for ACE?

The seven pilot campuses will continue to receive additional supports from the district to ensure they sustain student successes and remain off the “Improvement Required” list. Current plans indicate that schools will remain in the program for four years total, with some supports scaling back during years three and four. Given the effectiveness of this initiative, the district would like to scale the program to additional campuses, but it is constrained by the budget. As a result, no new schools will be added to the ACE program during the 2016-17 school year. At Commit!, we agree with the Annie W Blanton Elementary Teacher who said:

“It is unacceptable for children to be put in harm’s way (academically) when something can and should be done to alter the outcome. ACE will assist in giving children, all children, an opportunity to receive a quality education and hope for their future. We at the very least, owe them that much.”

¹ Sanders, W.L. (2000). Value-Added Assessment from student achievement data: Opportunities and Hurdles. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 14.

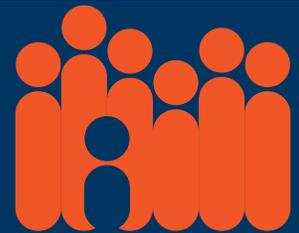
² ISIP assessment results.

³ TEA STAAR performance data.

⁴ The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Overview of the ACE Campuses:

	Elementary Schools				Middle Schools		
	Blanton	Mills	Pease	Umphey Lee	Dade	Edison	Zumwalt
Eco. Dis.	93%	96%	91%	94%	89%	94%	90%
Students of Color	98%	97%	99%	99%	99%	99%	100%



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Learn about turnaround work from Blanton ES principal Ms. Garza (lgarza@dallasisd.org) or Dade MS principal, Ms. Washington (trwashington@dallasisd.org)

ADMINISTRATORS
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To learn more about the design and implementation of ACE, contact Jolee Healey at JHealey@dallasisd.org

COMMUNITY MEMBERS
ADVOCATE

Write to your school board trustee to let her/him know you support the ACE program. Find yours at: dallasisd.org/domain/679



The Bright Spot Series

About The Bright Spot Series

The Commit! Partnership is excited to highlight and share successful, data-backed practices that are moving the needle for students in Dallas County through the Bright Spot Series.

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View more at Commit2dallas.org/category/bright-spots • For general inquiry, contact Carissa.Grisham@commit2dallas.org



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