Bridges to Teaching: A Transition to Teaching project completed the final year of a five-year $1.25M grant to the Dallas Independent School District’s (Dallas ISD) Alternative Certification Department. The grant was authorized in September, 2006, under Title II, Part C, Subpart 1, Chapter B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Grant funds have been used to recruit, train, and place alternative certification interns with the Dallas ISD. In 2006-07, the first year of the program, 146 participants were recruited for the 2007-08 school year (cohort 1). The second cohort included 83 participants, who began teaching during the 2008-09 school year, the third cohort began teaching in 2009-10 and included 85 participants, and the fourth cohort of 54 participants taught during the 2010-11 school year.

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to compare the effectiveness of groups of first-year teachers. Four groups were considered: Bridges to Teaching interns, other district-trained alternative certification (AC) interns, external AC interns, and certified teachers. All teachers were to have received district required support. A secondary purpose of the evaluation was to report the retention and certification rates for Bridges to Teaching interns.

**Teacher Effectiveness**

Scores on Classroom Effectiveness Indices (CEIs) for Bridges to Teaching interns were compared to the scores of other district AC interns, external AC interns, and certified teachers from their first year in the Dallas ISD. At the district level, CEI scores range from zero to 100 with a normed mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. A series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted using CEI scores in language arts, math, and science. Results for teachers in bilingual classes were very similar to the overall results and are not presented.

Bridges to Teaching interns (M = 48.2) received, on average, lower language arts CEI scores than only external interns (M = 50.7). They received higher scores than previously certified teachers (M = 47.9), and scored similarly to other AC interns with the Dallas ISD (M = 48.2). However, no differences were significant. Group scores ranged from 15.8 to 72.0; Bridges to Teaching interns’ scores ranged from 33.0 to 67.9. Figure 1 illustrates the mean language arts CEI scores for first-year interns and teachers with the Dallas ISD.

The range of CEI scores in mathematics varied from 13.3 to 83.0; the range of Bridges to Teaching interns’ scores varied widely from 13.0 to 77.3. Bridges to Teaching interns average score was 46.8. This was lower than other district AC interns (M = 49.4), external interns (M = 47.4), and previously certified teachers (M = 48.8). As with language arts scores, the differences among the groups were not statistically significant. A comparison of the group means for mathematics is shown in Figure 2.

CEI scores of first-year teachers in science ranged from 24.2 to 69.7. Bridges to teaching interns’ scores ranged from 40.2 to 57.8 with an average score of 49.9. This average slightly lower than other district AC interns (M = 50.8), but higher than both external interns (M = 45.3) and previously certified teachers (M = 45.3). As with the previous analyses, the differences among groups were not statistically significant. Means for each group are represented in Figure 3. It should be noted that, overall, the number of teachers receiving science CEI scores was quite small. Only nine Bridges to Teaching interns were assigned science CEI scores.
Retention and Certification

The terms of the Bridges to Teaching grant required that an intern provide three years of service to the Dallas ISD. During the first year of each cohort, Bridges to Teaching interns returned to teach a second year at 89, 95, 93, and 94 percent rates, respectively (Figure 4). A contingency table analysis with follow-up pairwise comparisons was conducted for cohort 4 to compare the first-year retention rates of Bridges interns to the retention rates of other teacher types. While Bridges interns were not retained at significantly higher rate than other types of AC interns, the rate (94.4%) was significantly higher than the rates of first-year teachers with prior certification (82.8%) and external interns (80.9%). Of the Bridges to Teaching interns in cohort 4, 64 percent \((n = 35)\) had received certification prior to beginning a second year of teaching.

Bridges interns in cohort 3 returned to teach a third year at higher rates than the other types of teachers, though the differences were not statistically significant. Exactly 80 percent of Bridges to Teaching interns in cohort 3 began a third year with the Dallas ISD (see Figure 5). The rate for external AC interns’ was somewhat lower (76.9%); other district interns (65.8%) and previously certified teachers (68.0%) returned at considerably lower rates.

Summary

The language arts, mathematics, and science CEI scores for Bridges to Teaching interns were similar to other types of first-year teachers with the Dallas ISD during the 2010-11 school year. These results are not different than those of past evaluations. Bridges to Teaching interns have consistently scored, on average, the same as other types of first-year teachers. Analyses of retention indicated that, across all cohorts, Bridges to Teaching interns were more likely than previously certified teachers to return a second year. Over 94 percent of the Bridges to Teaching interns in cohort 4 began the 2011-12 school year with the Dallas ISD. Furthermore, 80 percent of the Bridges to Teaching interns in cohort 3 returned for a third year, a rate comparable to those of previous cohorts. While higher than other groups of teachers in cohort 3, the differences were not significant.

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