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# Dallas Independent School District and Their Recent Growth

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Written by Sara Chu, Director of Operations and Community Strategy  
Houstonians for Greater Public Schools

## Introduction

Even though Houston and Dallas have a friendly rivalry, there are several similarities between the two cities, especially when it comes to public education. With about 215,000 students, the Houston Independent School District (HISD) is the largest district in Texas. The Dallas Independent School District (DISD) comes in second with nearly 160,000 students. Situated right in the heart of their respective metropolitan areas, both districts serve a diverse student body and have the largest budgets in the state. Like many major cities across the country, Houston and Dallas provide their residents with many cultural and economic opportunities; however, both cities face a number of challenges in providing an equitable education for all children.

Over the past few years, DISD has improved immensely thanks to many bold and innovative reforms. DISD saw a reduction in IR schools from 37 to 22 between the 2014 – 2015 school year and the 2015 – 2016 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school board also approved a new teacher performance pay system, which helped retain high performing teachers. They developed an initiative that places the most effective teachers in the lowest performing schools.

Because there are several similarities between DISD and HISD, the patterns of improvement we have seen in DISD could help improve the quality of education in HISD. The following report will describe the goals and results of various initiatives taken by Dallas ISD and some of the changes that occurred in the past few years.

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<sup>1</sup> "Dallas ISD's turnaround program shows early promise, as six of seven campuses move off state's failing list:"

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2016/08/15/dallas-isds-turnaround-program-shows-early-promise-six-seven-campus-move-states-failing-list>

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## Teacher Excellence Initiative

TEI is the teacher performance pay system used in DISD, which links teacher performance with pay. TEI provides a way to measure the impact teachers have on student learning because “teachers are the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement.”<sup>2</sup> The goal of TEI is to develop highly effective teachers and appropriately compensate them for their effectiveness.

The three components of TEI are:<sup>2, 3</sup>

- Classroom performance by the teacher assessed by a certified evaluator (typically a principal or assistant principal) (50%)
  - lesson preparation
  - instruction delivery
  - classroom culture
  - professional growth
- Student results (35%)
  - student growth and performance on tests (district-made Assessments of Course Performance (ACPs) for Semester 1 and 2, School STAAR, and Teacher NerraNova/SUPERA)
  - school growth and performance on state tests
  - Student Learning Objectives (teacher determined measure of student growth)
- Student surveys (15%)

Teachers get feedback on their performance and receive support through various professional development opportunities.

At the end of the school year, teachers receive an evaluation score. Then, teachers are placed at an overall effectiveness level, which is tied to compensation. Teachers are paid based on points received in their two most recent evaluation scores. District leadership stipulated that their pay would not drop below their 2014-2015 salary.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “TEI Infographic:”

[http://tei.dallasisd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HCM-TEI-Infographic\\_v06.pdf](http://tei.dallasisd.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HCM-TEI-Infographic_v06.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> “Dallas ISD is building a team to help implement Teacher Excellence Initiative:”

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/news/2014/05/27/dallas-isd-is-building-a-team-to-help-imple-ment-teacher-excellence-initiative>

<sup>4</sup> “Teacher Guidebook 2017-2018:” <http://tei.dallasisd.org/home/resources/>

Novice	Progressing		Proficient			Exemplary		Master
	I	II	I	II	III	I	II	
\$50K	\$51K	\$53K	\$56K	\$60K	\$65K	\$74K	\$82K	\$90K

Figure 1<sup>2</sup>

The hope of this initiative is to create a more equitable system of paying teachers, which would provide specific supports for lower-performing teachers or encourage them to seek other careers, while attracting and retaining higher-performing teachers. Teachers were previously paid through a seniority pay scale pre-TEI.

Results:

2014 – 2015 (inaugural year)

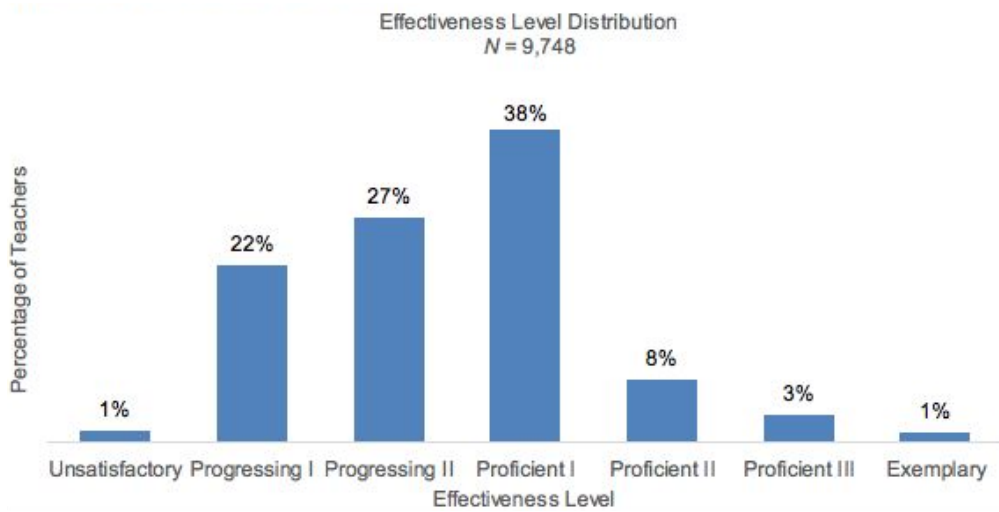
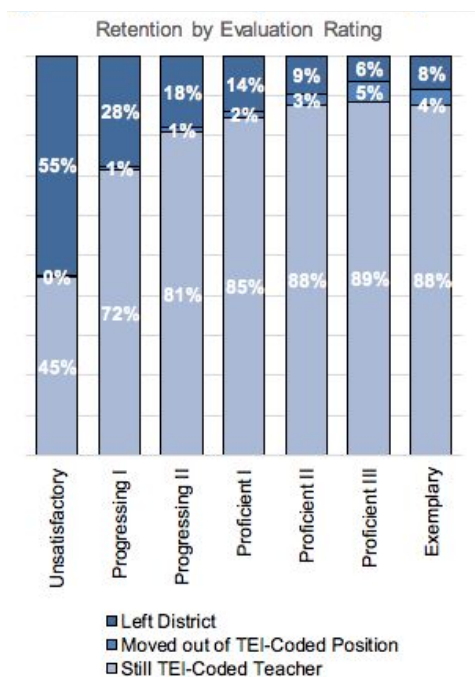


Figure 2<sup>5</sup>

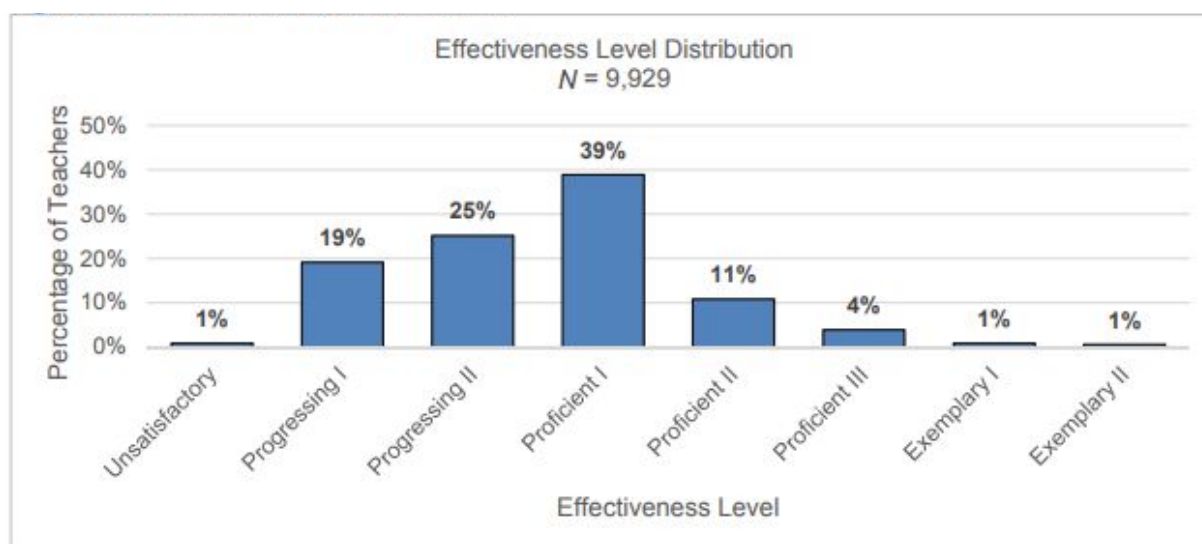
<sup>5</sup> “Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI) 2014-2015:”

<https://www.dallasisd.org/cms/lib/TX01001475/Centricity/domain/98/evaluation/14-15/finalrpts/EA15-539-2%20TEI%20FULL%20EVAL%20FINAL%20REPORT%20v8.pdf>

Figure 3<sup>5</sup>

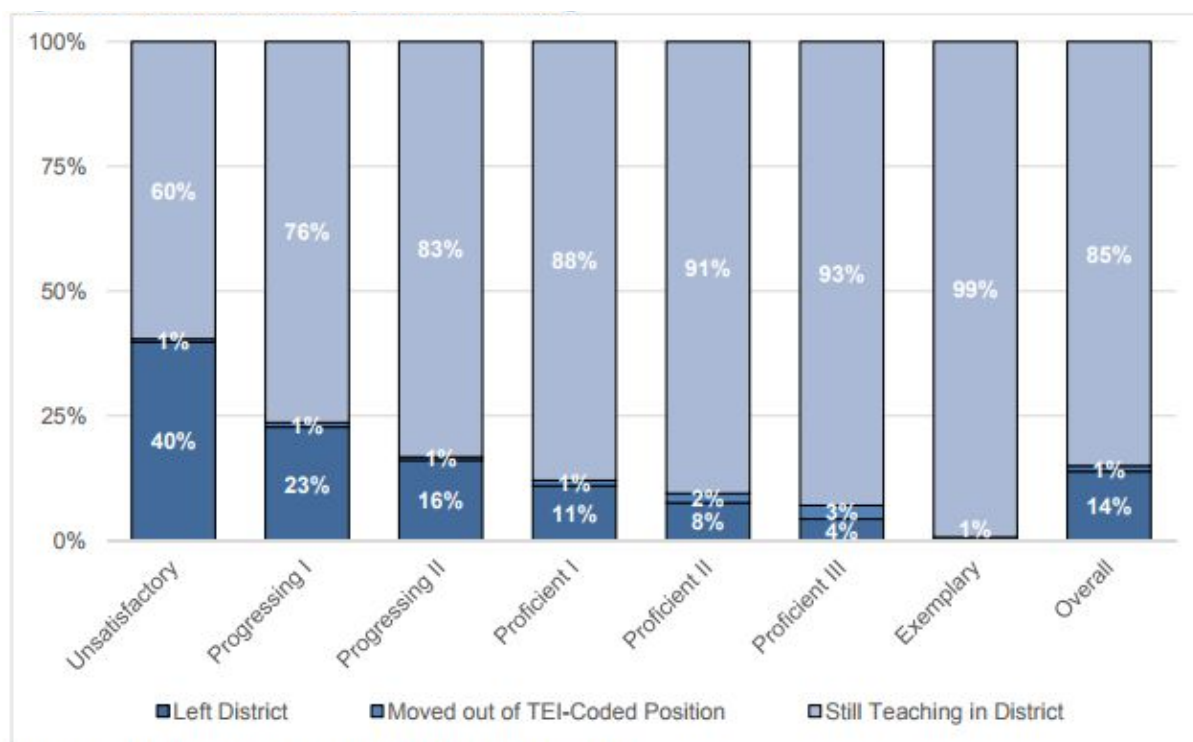
Most of the teachers scored between Progressing I and Proficient I. About 72% of eligible teachers (teachers who were full time, did not leave the district or move into a non-TEI position) *received a salary increase*. After the first year of TEI implementation, about 84% of TEI teachers returned the next year.

2015 – 2016 (2<sup>nd</sup> year of implementation)



Note: Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Figure 4<sup>5</sup>



**Note:** Percentages may not add to 100 percent due to rounding.

Figure 5<sup>5</sup>

Like the first year, most of the teachers scored between Progressing I to Proficient I. This year, about 58% of eligible teachers received a salary increase, and about 85% of TEI teachers returned for the next year.

## Accelerated Campus Excellence (ACE)

In 2015, DISD launched the ACE initiative which uses stipends to bring the most effective teachers and administrators of the district to some of its lowest-performing schools. At the end of the first year of implementation, six of the seven schools in this program moved off the state's "Improvement Required" (IR) list.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the key components of ACE include:<sup>6</sup>

- Effective teachers as identified through the Teacher Excellence Initiative (TEI)
- Effective campus leadership teams
- Financial incentives for staff

Results:<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "About ACE:" <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/46765>

<sup>7</sup> "ACE Accomplishments:" <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/46766>

The ACE initiative ended its inaugural year with several accomplishments:

- Improved academic performance in Reading, Writing, Math, Science, and Social Studies
- Improvements on 13 of 14 STAAR subject tests with an average gain of 16 percentage points
- 2,625 fewer disciplinary referrals
- More positive responses from parents
- 30% more K-2 students read at or above grade level

## Public School Choice

The goals of this initiative include engaging students in a “best-fit” school (where they will be able to realize their full potential) and expanding school options (35 new choice schools by 2020).<sup>8</sup> Public School Choice (PSC) is a tool for DISD students so they can attend a “best-fit” school, a school where teachers can meaningfully work with their students<sup>9</sup> by engaging the specific interests, aspiration, and learning styles of the student.

Public School Choice offerings include:

- Magnet Schools
- Choice Schools
  - Transformation Schools – start up campuses that design and implement a new school-wide Choice model
  - Innovation Schools – existing neighborhood schools that re-purpose the existing campus into a school-wide Choice model
- Choice Programs – small scale choice programs that exist within a school

Results:<sup>10</sup>

The Office of Transformation and Innovation (OTI) conducts achievement analyses for all Choice Schools every year. The OTI conducted two approaches to analyze both the Innovation Schools and Transformation Schools. There have been positive student gains in the latest results:

- Innovation Schools
  - The passing rate increased in every subject area for the only Innovation high school (Bryan Adams High School Leadership Academy)
  - Several double-digit gains in passing rates at Innovation schools in Reading (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> grade), Math (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> grade), Writing (4<sup>th</sup>), Science (5<sup>th</sup> grade)

<sup>8</sup> “Student Achievement Goals:” <https://www.dallasisd.org/goals>

<sup>9</sup> “The Office of Transformation & Innovation:” <https://www.dallasisd.org/choice>

<sup>10</sup> “Student Achievement Results:” <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/43002>

- o Improved passing rates in the majority of Innovation schools for several student subgroups in each subject area (except in Special Education for Writing and Social Studies)
- Transformation Schools
  - o All three Transformation Schools exceeded district averages in all tested areas for both OTI achievement analyses

## Career & Technical Education (CTE)

The priorities include increasing certifications for students (4,000 by 2020) and expanding the following CTE programs:<sup>8</sup>

- 1) Architecture and Construction
- 2) Arts, Audio/Video Technology, and Communications
- 3) Business Management and Administration
- 4) Education and Training
- 5) Finance
- 6) Government and Public Administration
- 7) Health Science
- 8) Hospitality and Tourism
- 9) Human Services
- 10) Information Technology
- 11) Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security
- 12) Manufacturing
- 13) Marketing
- 14) Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM)
- 15) Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

DISD also has 42 National Academy Foundation (NAF) academies in 20 high schools. NAF is an educational nonprofit that creates academies with curriculum for schools that is meant to create a learning environment with STEM infused industry-specific curricula and work-based learning experiences, which includes internships. NAF academies are designed as small learning communities within larger schools or as stand-alone public high schools.<sup>11</sup>

There are 5 NAF academy themes:

- 1) Academies of Engineering
- 2) Academies of Finance
- 3) Academies of Health Sciences
- 4) Academies of Hospitality and Tourism
- 5) Academies of Information Technology

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<sup>11</sup> "About NAF:" <https://naf.org/about>

These themes are formed around career industries with strong employment opportunities and growth.<sup>12</sup>

Results:<sup>13</sup>

During the 2016-2017 school year, 36,622 students were served through CTE programs at 37 high school campuses and 32 middle school campuses.

There were over 4,600 industry certifications earned by DISD students during the 2016-2017 school year. Some of the certifications include Microsoft Office Specialist, Registered Dental Assisting, and Automotive Service Excellence.

## 2015 Bond Program

In 2013, a study in DISD looked at the conditions of its facilities and identified the needed repairs. In the fall of 2014, the district created the Future Facilities Task Force (FFTF). They were given the responsibility of creating recommendations for new schools, facility improvements, and building additions to support growing programs. After doing their due diligence, they presented their recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Board approved sending a package of \$1.6 billion in improvements to voters. In November 2015, the voters approved the 2015 DISD Bond Program.<sup>14</sup>

Overview of the Bond Program:<sup>15</sup>

- \$465 million to construct nine new and replacement schools
- \$195 million for expanded facilities and 326 classrooms
- \$233 million for educational adequacy improvements
- \$92 million for new educational programs
- \$500 million for capital improvements
- \$105 million for land acquisition

## Texas Education Agency (TEA) Accountability Summary: DISD vs. HISD

There is no doubt that Dallas ISD made incredible improvements the past couple of years because of their various initiatives and programs, and their improvements are unparalleled compared to other districts in Texas. However, it is wise to compare the performances between DISD and HISD. The TEA analyzes data to create and report various accountability ratings that help Texas public schools.

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<sup>12</sup> "NAF:" <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/49158>

<sup>13</sup> "Career and Technical Education:" <https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/3372>

<sup>14</sup> "About the 2015 Dallas ISD Bond Program:" <https://www.dallasisd.org/domain/16778>

<sup>15</sup> "Overview of the 2015 Bond Program:" <https://www.dallasisd.org/domain/14966>



Below, Figures 7-10 illustrate the accountability summaries of Dallas ISD and Houston ISD from 2013 – 2017.<sup>16</sup>

Figure 7

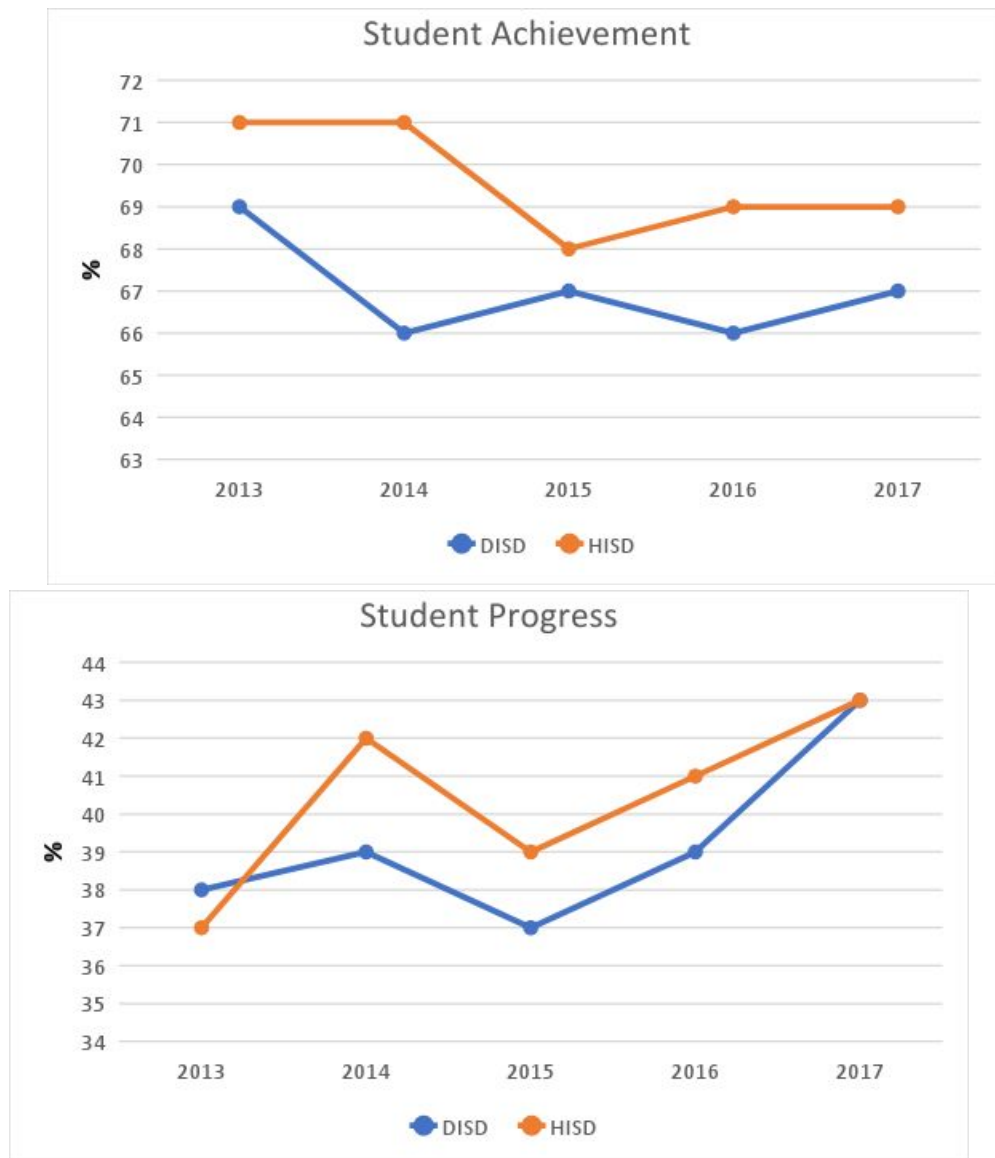


Figure 8

<sup>16</sup> "Texas Accountability Rating System:"  
<https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/index.html>

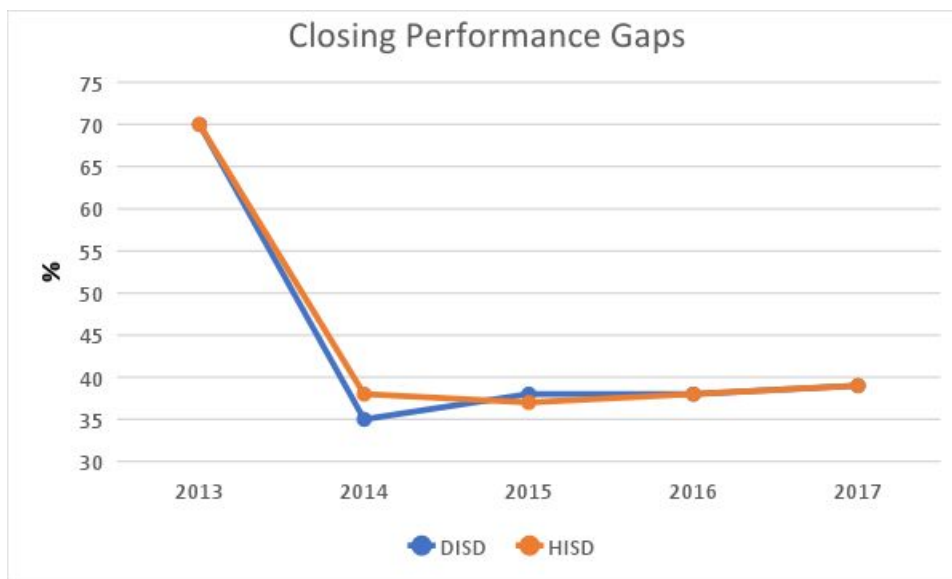


Figure 9

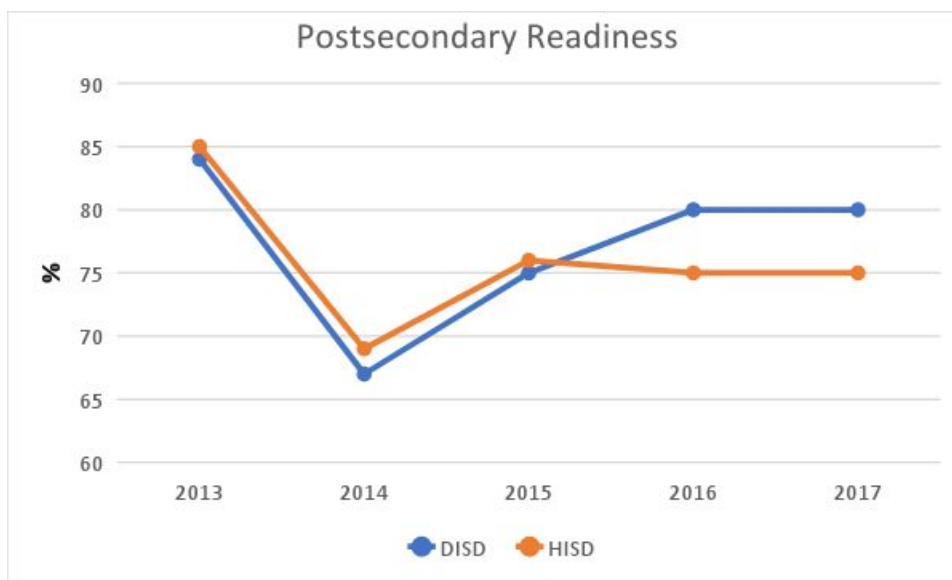


Figure 10

Figure 11 compares the percentages of students in each district who meet or pass the college readiness indicator score of 1150 on the SAT or 21 on the ACT.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> "Texas Academic Performance Reports:" <https://tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/index.html>

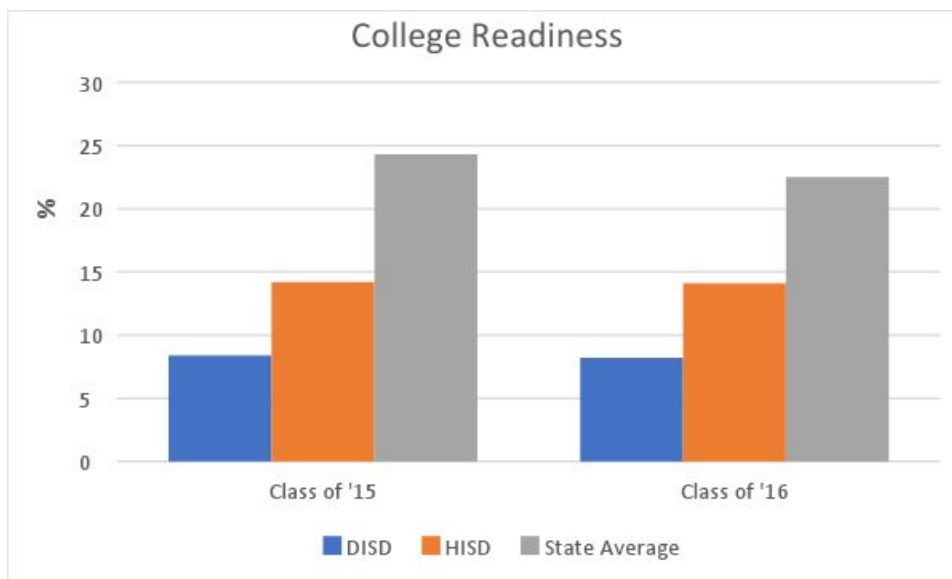


Figure 11

Figure 12 compares the percentages of public Pre-K students who finish the school year ready for Kindergarten.<sup>18</sup>

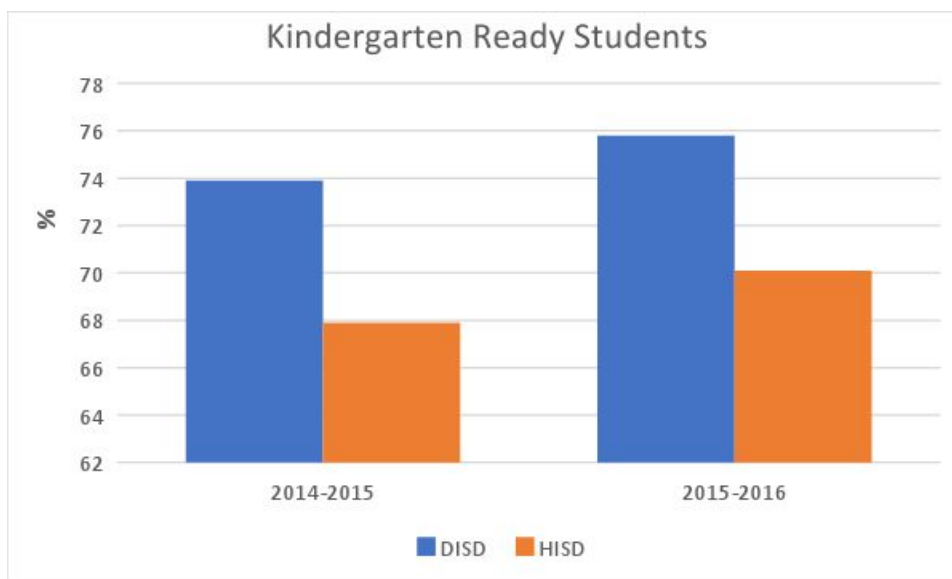


Figure 12

Results (**bold denotes highlights**):

- **Although HISD has shown higher standardized test results (Student Achievement), DISD has quickly caught up in terms of Student Progress**

<sup>18</sup> "Kindergarten Programs & Readiness:"

<http://www.texaseducationinfo.org/Home/Topic/Kindergarten%20Programs%20and%20Readiness?br=PK-12>

**and is on track to pass HISD in 2018. As more of their students progress, DISD could pass HISD in terms of Student Achievement in the future.**

- The *Closing Performance Gaps* rating are very similar for HISD and DISD
- **For the past two years, DISD has outperformed HISD in *Postsecondary Readiness*. This may suggest that, even though HISD has a higher Student Achievement rate than DISD, DISD curriculum and graduation plan may be more aligned with preparing students for postsecondary success.**
  - Postsecondary readiness is equally weighted among the following components or only on the STAAR Meets Grade Level standard component for elementary and middle school campuses:<sup>19</sup>
    - STAAR Meets Grade Level Standard
    - Graduation Rate
    - Graduation Plan Rate
      - Among the students who graduated, the graduation plan rate measures the percentage of students who graduated and have completed the *recommended coursework* for high schoolers – a higher standard than the minimum coursework required for graduation.
      - This rate requires tracking the status of the cohort of students from the time they enter grade 9 through their expected graduation with their class in four years.
      - A class contains all students of a cohort except the students who leave the Texas public school system for reasons other than graduation, earning a GED, or dropping out.
    - Postsecondary Component: College and Career Readiness
      - This measures how prepared a high school student is for college, the workforce, job training programs, or the military.
      - There are three ways to measure postsecondary readiness:
        - Postsecondary component – a student who met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) college readiness standards for both reading and mathematics.
        - Advanced/Dual-Credit Course Completion – a student who completed and earned credit for at least two advanced/dual-credit courses
        - CTE Coherent Sequence of Courses – a student who enrolled and reported a coherent sequence of CTE courses as a part of a four-year plan to take CTE course for three or more credits
- **For the past two years, HISD has graduated a higher percentage of college-ready students than DISD, though the percent of students**

<sup>19</sup> “2017 Accountability Manual:” <https://tea.texas.gov/2017accountabilitymanual.aspx>

**meeting the national college-readiness standard in both districts is below the state average (~23%).**

- **A renewed focus on Early Childhood Education has produced higher rates of Kindergarten readiness among Pre-K students in Dallas.**
  - DISD recently embarked on an Early Childhood Education initiative that is very similar to HISD's Early Childhood Education, which started in 2005.
    - The requirements to be eligible for free Pre-K are the same in HISD and DISD.
    - If a child is not eligible for free Pre-K, he or she can enroll in a tuition-based Pre-K program in DISD for \$5,250 and in HISD for \$4,502.
  - When DISD created their Early Childhood Education initiative, a part of their strategy was to partner with the community to provide a continuum of care to support children from birth. Another part was to focus on involving families within four key relationships: family and child, family and school, family and family, and family and community.

<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusion

Dallas ISD carried out a series of initiatives that greatly improved the quality of education in the district. These plans addressed the needs of the districts, were well thought out, and included measurable goals.

Some of the most successful DISD initiatives include the TEI and ACE programs. TEI includes a clear system on how teachers will be evaluated, and incorporates a competitive pay scale for the most effective teachers. After the first year of TEI implementation, most teachers who received the two lowest scores or who were not graded left the district. The ACE initiative places the highest performing teachers and administrators in the lowest performing schools. At the end of its first year of implementation, six of the seven schools moved off of the state's IR list.

While Dallas still has a long way to go, Houston ISD could learn from the gains DISD has made the past few years. Some of the successful elements of DISD initiatives, like the TEI and ACE programs, could substantially improve the quality of education for Houston's most underserved communities and put HISD on track to achieve educational equity.

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<sup>20</sup> "Early Learning Family Engagement Plan:"

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B93hR745MHjZ1d2cmpveXZpblU/view>