STRATEGIC COMPENSATION INITIATIVE REACH PILOT
2007–2008 EVALUATION REPORT

Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall 2007, Austin Independent School District (AISD) implemented the first phase of a new strategic compensation pilot, AISD REACH, designed to improve student learning by attracting and retaining well-qualified teachers and principals, strengthen the knowledge and skills of campus staff, and recognize exemplary practice with various forms of compensation. Nine campuses from across the district were invited to join the pilot, and subsequently voted to participate. The pilot was funded with $4.3 million of the local Maintenance and Operations Tax.

The pilot program included three major elements: Student Growth, Professional Growth, and Recruitment and Retention at highest needs schools. To be eligible for participation in year 1 of the pilot, teaching staff had to be teachers of record or special education teachers who work with students at least 50% of the time. Under this definition, nearly all teachers and some instructional specialists on pilot campuses were eligible to participate. Principals also were eligible for participation. The program included extensive training and support for teachers, who were required to analyze student assessment data and establish two specific Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to be accomplished by the end of the school year. Teachers were rewarded with stipends for meeting each SLO, and principals received stipends for supporting the pilot activities surrounding this process.

Additional stipends were awarded to teachers and principals for outstanding school-wide performance on TEA's measure of Comparable Improvement for reading and math. The program also provided extra support and incentives to teachers and principals at five schools designated as "highest needs" based on their population of students with economic disadvantage, special education, or limited English proficiency. These extra program elements included full-time mentors to support novice teachers and additional stipends for teachers and principals who either moved into or remained at those schools. Teachers and principals from all pilot schools also had an opportunity to earn extra stipends for both participation and performance in a voluntary professional growth program called *Take One!*®

Four hundred and sixty-seven teachers and nine principals participated in year 1 of the AISD REACH pilot. These teachers earned $4,602 each, on average, for a total of $2,149,000. Four hundred and fifty-six teachers earned stipend awards ranging from $1000 to $8,700 at highest needs schools ($5,420 per teacher, on average) and from $200 to $6,400 at non-highest needs schools ($3,089 per teacher, on average). On average, principals earned $8,244 in REACH -related stipends.

Information about the pilot program was collected using a variety of district student performance, human resources, and institutional data, supplemented with surveys, focus

groups, and interviews throughout the school year from teachers, principals, program staff, and members of the steering committee. For research purposes, two comparison schools with similar characteristics were selected for each pilot campus. Formative evaluation and staff responsiveness during year 1 allowed program changes to be implemented throughout the school year to improve the process in real time.

KEY FINDINGS

Despite a variety of implementation challenges (e.g., the timing for hiring novice teacher mentors, the lingering skepticism of teachers concerning performance incentives, and procedural difficulties associated with program implementation), outcomes from year 1 were generally neutral, with some positive findings. Results are summarized below for each program element, and more detailed summaries may be found following the results for each program element in the Results section of this report.

Student Growth

- The majority of teachers (83%) met at least one of their SLOs, and nearly two thirds of all pilot teachers met both their SLOs (64%).
- The validity of SLOs was supported by results showing that teachers who established and met math SLOs had students with significantly better performance on math Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) than did those who established but did not meet their math SLOs. Results for reading also support the benefits of establishing SLOs; teachers who established reading SLOs had students with significantly better performance on reading TAKS than those who did not.
- All teachers and principals at six schools received stipends for school-wide growth on TAKS by achieving the top quartile of TEA's Comparable Improvement measure in one or more subjects. Results were particularly encouraging for math, for which pilot schools overall were 20% more likely to improve their actual ranking (from 1 to 41) compared with their prior year ranking than were the research comparison schools. The effect was strongest for non-highest needs pilot schools, which improved by 8.6 places on average within TEA's cohort of 41 schools.
- At the middle school level, pilot teachers had significantly more students scoring above expectations on math TAKS than their comparison teachers (27% vs. 14%, respectively). No differences were found between pilot and comparison teachers at elementary and high schools.

Professional Growth

- Nine half-time mentors were assigned up to 5 mentees each, and 4 full-time mentors were assigned up to 10 mentees each, to whom they provided extensive support when

the program was implemented after the start of the school year. Teachers in their first 3 years of teaching were no less likely to meet their SLOs than were more experienced teachers; in fact, in highest needs schools, a greater percentage of novice teachers than of more experienced teachers met both SLOs. Although the difference was not statistically significant, results suggest that the Novice Teacher Mentoring program and SLO training for novice teachers may have enabled them to perform as well as their more experienced peers did.

- Forty-six teachers (about 10%) and four principals (44%) participated in the *Take One!*® program. Eight of the nine pilot schools had at least one participant. Ultimately, 62% (n = 31; 30 teachers and 1 principal) submitted a final portfolio and received a stipend of $200, while the others participated in most or all of the professional development sessions, including several who also videotaped a portion of their portfolio, but did not submit. Of the 31 participants who submitted a portfolio, 10 received scores high enough to apply toward National Board certification within 3 years, which also allowed them to receive an additional stipend of $200.

Recruitment and Retention at Highest Needs Schools

- Overall, only about 9% of pilot teachers made a request to transfer to another AISD school, and the numbers were nearly the same for teachers at highest needs pilot and comparison schools. The percentage of pilot teachers who made transfer requests was similar to that of comparison teachers who did so, both at non-highest needs and highest needs schools. Interestingly, about one third of pilot teachers who made a transfer request desired a transfer to another REACH pilot campus.
- On average, fewer requests were made to transfer into highest needs REACH pilot schools than into their comparison schools. However, data suggest teachers generally were not well aware of the REACH pilot; thus, teachers probably were not avoiding REACH campuses deliberately. Transfer requests were more likely to have been influenced by the anticipated Academically Unacceptable state rating for one of the pilot's highest needs schools (Hart Elementary).
- Year 1 retention rates improved significantly for both pilot and comparison schools, and were not significantly better among pilot schools than among comparisons. Thus, 1-year retention results were neutral. However, teacher retention rates increased by a significantly greater percentage over a 4-year period for highest needs pilot schools than for highest needs comparison schools, suggesting some potential for positive impact on retention at those schools.

- An examination of retention rates for novice teachers at highest needs pilot and comparison schools reveals a significantly steeper one-year increase in retention rates for novice teachers at pilot schools than for novice teachers at comparison schools.
- Teachers with low-performing students were less likely to remain on their campuses than were teachers with high-performing students. Also, leavers reported weaker feelings of attachment to the teaching profession and to their campuses than did those who remained, and had been on their campuses for a significantly shorter time than had those who remained.

Based on a combination of experiences and formative feedback throughout the school year, several changes were made to the pilot for the 2008–2009 school year. Perhaps most notable was the expanded eligibility for participation, which was altered to include assistant principals, instructional coaches and specialists, and librarians. Significant changes also were made to the SLO program, core team composition, and Professional Growth program elements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations are made in three general areas: communication, capacity, and professional development. In the area of communication, REACH staff should communicate regularly with both program participants and other district staff in a format that is consistent and easily recognized. This should increase awareness of specific program elements and pilot activities, and should garner support for the program. To build capacity necessary for program expansion to additional schools, REACH staff should assist campus principals in the creation of an SLO "action plan" and should build capacity among pilot campus staff for supporting pilot activities. This also should help to ensure fidelity to the program and facilitate the integration of pilot activities with school processes. To maximize professional development of the REACH staff and of all pilot participants, REACH staff should participate in opportunities for professional growth and learning, and all pilot participants should attend SLO training. In addition, the *Take One!*® program stipend should be increased to reflect the rigor of that professional growth opportunity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

NATIONAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATOR COMPENSATION

Teacher attrition is one of the most widely studied phenomena in education research, and for good reason: attrition is costly to students, educators, administrators, and community stakeholders. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2007), from 2003–2004 to 2004–2005, about 17% of teachers changed schools or left the teaching profession, and various estimates place the financial cost of attrition in the United States at between $5 billion and more than $7 billion annually (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007). In addition to the financial costs, teacher attrition has other critical consequences, including the disruption of collegial relationships and professional learning communities for teachers who remain on the campus; the disruption of relationships between students and teachers; and most importantly, the potential for reduced teaching quality and effectiveness. Although certain working conditions play a large role in teacher attrition, "poor salary or benefits" has been cited as one of the top reasons teachers leave the profession (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007).

Pay and benefits are designed to increase employee productivity in salaried positions; however, compensation often is not aligned with specific employee behaviors or performance. In education, the vast majority of teacher salaries are determined according to a rigid formula based on years of teaching experience and degree attainment, neither of which is related to student achievement beyond the first few years in the teaching profession (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; National Governor's Association, 2007). However, evidence suggests that when compensation is tied directly to individual behavior, the highest level of work effort is realized (Daniels, Daniels, & Abernathy, 2006; Lazear, 2000). For this reason, school districts and states across the nation have implemented alternative compensation strategies that either replace or supplement the traditional salary schedule method, which provides little incentive for professional improvement (Koppich, 2008).

Incentive-based compensation can be effective not only when tied to individual employee performance, but also when tied to group-level outcomes. Drago and Turnbull (1988) asserted that incentive-based compensation related to group performance encourages mutual monitoring among coworkers and can change attitudes about work effort throughout an organization. This research suggests that linking compensation in school settings with both individual teacher and school performance may incentivize the positive behaviors of high-quality teachers. Research also indicates that mentoring programs can have a positive impact on the performance of new teachers and on their retention (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004). Perhaps most importantly, teacher pay-for-performance programs can have positive effects on student

achievement (Figlio & Kenny, 2007; Muralidharan & Sundararaman, 2006; Podgursky & Springer, 2007).

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT REACH OVERVIEW

In 2004, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) Board of Trustees appointed a task force of AISD teachers, principals, parents, and community members to conduct an extensive review of compensation models used across the country and to meet with key experts in the field. The task force examined a variety of nontraditional methods for compensating teachers and recognized the potential for using strategic compensation methods to attract and retain high-quality teachers at all campuses within the district. Based on this work, the task force recommended the development of a new method for compensating teachers in AISD.

In agreement with task force recommendations, the AISD Board of Trustees supported the development of a new compensation initiative, as did the Austin Chamber of Commerce, which created a special task force of business leaders to share their experiences regarding monetary incentives and rewards. Ultimately, a steering committee (also comprising teachers, principals, parents, and members of the business community) and several appointed working groups designed the strategic compensation pilot program (Figure 1 on page 5). The pilot, now called AISD REACH, is aimed at improving student learning by attracting and retaining well-qualified teachers and principals, strengthening the knowledge and skills of campus staff, and recognizing exemplary practice with various forms of compensation.

To assist with program development, the district contracted the services of the Community Training and Assessment Center (CTAC) and Augenblick, Palaich, & Associates, Inc. (APA). In the early stages of work, CTAC administered a survey about teacher compensation to 2,818 AISD teachers and principals in Spring 2007 to gauge district support for a strategic compensation plan in AISD. Results showed considerable differences between principals and teachers on opinions concerning rewards for student learning. For example, 97% of principals and 61% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that a compensation plan should reward teachers for increasing student learning in their individual classrooms. The majority of teachers also believed a compensation plan should reward teachers who receive satisfactory (53%) or outstanding (69%) performance evaluations, although principals were not as supportive of rewards tied to evaluations as were teachers. Survey results regarding support for group-level rewards found that 100% of principals and 63% of teachers believed teachers should be rewarded for improving student learning in their schools. Teachers who had fewer years of experience tended to be more supportive of extra compensation in these areas than were teachers with more years of experience.

Principals and teachers reported similar feelings about compensation for challenging work assignments; 75% of principals and teachers reported that teachers who mentor other teachers should receive extra compensation, and 67% of principals and teachers reported that teachers should receive extra compensation for teaching in difficult-to-staff subjects. Both teachers (65%) and principals (59%) also indicated that teachers should receive a stipend for working in a hard-to-staff school.

Based on a literature review, consultation with educational compensation experts nationwide, and district survey results, the Strategic Compensation Initiative (SCI) steering committee developed a pilot program to compensate teachers and principals in innovative ways, beyond the traditional salary schedule. The philosophy underlying the initiative led to a comprehensive set of program elements that not only encourages and rewards student achievement, but also provides teachers and principals with the tools necessary to improve their craft. In addition, the initiative rewards teachers who choose to work in the most challenging schools.

Development of AISD REACH

The new strategic compensation program was designed from the perspective that most teachers already work diligently and experience a variety of reasons to be motivated to help their students learn (e.g., school accountability ratings and self-motivation). Thus, monetary incentives for student achievement would be unlikely to change the ways in which teachers work. This perspective led to a program that not only recognizes teachers for doing outstanding work, but also provides a support structure to facilitate professional growth that can result in greater student achievement. These supports, along with additional compensation for student growth, should work together to enhance teaching and learning, while rewarding teachers for accomplishing these objectives. Additionally, the program includes incentives for teachers to come to and remain at schools with the most challenging student populations.

Assessment of student learning is central to the work of teachers and also to the compensation of teachers whose students perform well. To neglect the state's criteria for school and student performance (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills [TAKS]) would remove the potential benefits of incentivizing school-wide collaboration (i.e., not just for teachers of tested subject areas and grade levels) to perform well on the accountability measure. Thus, the program includes incentives for school growth on the TAKS measure from year to year, which apply to all participating teachers regardless of their content area. However, TAKS does not assess growth from the beginning to end of a school year, nor does it provide a measure of the contribution made by teachers toward student performance in non-tested subjects and grade levels.

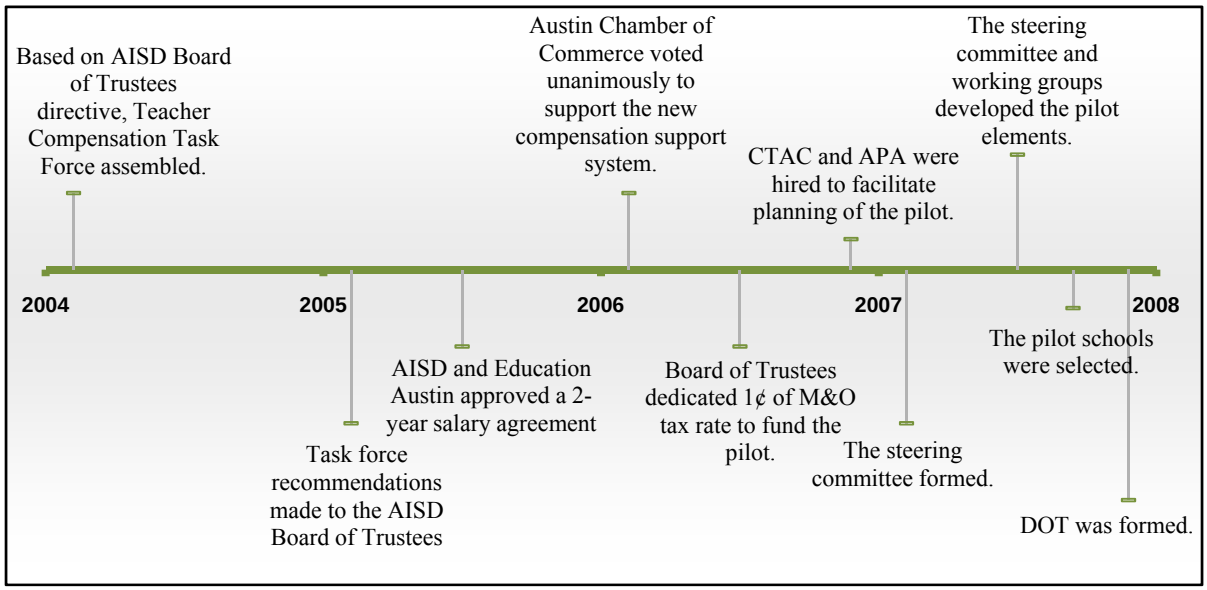
For these reasons, the program also incorporates methods of student assessment that extend beyond the broad scope of TAKS to include more sensitive measures that can capture the learning that occurs in a single classroom throughout the school year. Research shows that defining goals and objectives is useful in selecting appropriate content, learning activities, and assessment measures, and that clear learning objectives and expectations are associated with math and reading achievement (Matsumura et al., 2006; Schacter & Thum, 2004). Thus, evidence supports the REACH program's awards to individual teachers for contributions made through the use of Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), which are measured with non-TAKS assessments designed to capture student growth throughout a single school year.

Writing effective learning objectives requires teachers to review student data from early in the year and to establish objectives around student need. The process also requires the identification of appropriate measures to assess whether objectives have been accomplished. This process is thought to improve strategic instructional choices and the quality of outcomes. However, the process is not necessarily intuitive, and principals and teachers require professional development opportunities to learn how to write, use, and interpret objectives and assessments (CTAC, 2008). Evidence supports the REACH program's strong training component for teachers and principals so they become adept at developing objectives and using district data systems. Because AISD does not use a district-wide assessment to measure growth, teacher-developed assessments and teacher-selected assessments are critical to the measurement of SLOs. Thus, the initiative also incorporates teacher training about appropriate assessments.

Given the expense and also employee skepticism about an incentive-based compensation system, the steering committee determined that a 4-year, two-phase pilot process would afford the time necessary to monitor program effects and make necessary adjustments to the plan before the district community would be asked to support full-scale, district-wide implementation. The steering committee selected 18 schools to engage as potential participants in the pilot. Campuses were selected for possible participation based on their level of student need, representation of the AISD population, and presence of an experienced principal who was willing to facilitate the program. In Spring 2007, principals and teacher leaders from those campuses were informed about the pilot program and were told that 9 of the 18 schools would later be invited to join the first phase of the pilot, to begin in 2007–2008. Program staff were hired during the summer to support the implementation of various program elements, and a district operations team (D.O.T.) was formed in Fall 2007 to coordinate the pilot with regular district operations. At the start of the 2007–2008 school year, 9 schools received a formal invitation to join the pilot. (See the steering committee's policy document entitled *An Overview*

of AISD's REACH, a Strategic Compensation Initiative for a more detailed description of the program history.)

Figure 1. Timeline of the AISD REACH Pilot Program's Development



Schools Participating in Phase I of AISD REACH

To formally introduce the program to campuses, REACH staff provided a "pitch" presentation in which teachers received an overview of the events leading up to the pilot, the program elements were introduced, and teachers were given the opportunity to ask questions about the program. Schools were given 1 week in which to consider the offer and vote on whether to participate in the pilot. Teachers voted with the understanding that a majority vote by the campus (i.e., 75% in favor) meant all teachers would be obligated to participate, regardless of their individual preference for or against the program. All 9 campuses voted to participate in the pilot. The pilot program will expand to include 11 schools during the 2008–2009 school year and to approximately 18 schools in the 2009–2010 school year.

2007–2008 Pilot Schools

Lanier High School
O. Henry Middle School
Dobie Middle School
Barton Hills Elementary
Hart Elementary
Menchaca Elementary
Rodriguez Elementary
Sims Elementary
Sunset Valley

Five of the nine pilot schools were designated as highest needs schools: Lanier, Dobie, Hart, Rodriguez, and Sims. Highest needs schools are those in the top 30% of AISD schools within level, based on their populations of economically disadvantaged, special education, and English language learner

students (ELLs). Schools designated as highest needs are eligible for larger stipends and for additional program elements.

Funding for AISD REACH

Funding for the AISD REACH pilot comes from local and state sources. The AISD Board of Trustees designated $4.3 million per year (one penny of the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Tax Rate, fixed at the 2007-2008 fiscal year value) for the pilot program. Year 1 was funded solely with local M&O revenue, but funding for the 2008–2009 school year will be supplemented by a $5.4 million TEA District Awards for Teacher Excellence (DATE) grant, awarded in 2008, and a $1 million 2-year Texas Education Agency (TEA) Beginning Teacher Induction grant.

LOCAL PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The REACH pilot was designed to improve student learning by rewarding teachers and principals for success in the classroom and providing support for their professional growth. The pilot program included three major elements: Student Growth, Professional Growth, and Recruitment and Retention at highest needs schools. A summary of the program elements and their respective stipend amounts can be found in Appendix A. To be eligible for participation in year 1 of the pilot, teaching staff had to work with students at least 50% of the time. Under this definition, nearly all teachers and some instructional specialists on pilot campuses were eligible to participate. Principals also were eligible for participation.

Student Growth

The Student Growth element was designed to recognize teachers and principals for student growth, both at the classroom level and at the school level. Teachers and principals were eligible for two types of student growth stipends. One type was awarded to individual teachers who successfully achieved Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) that they establish for their students, while the other was awarded to all teachers and principals for school-wide growth at schools that ranked in the top quartile among 40 similar schools statewide, using the state's Comparable Improvement measure of TAKS growth.

Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). Teachers examined student performance data to identify two appropriate SLOs for their students and received a stipend for meeting one or both of them. Teachers administered pre-assessments to students in their selected area of need. Assessment results were used to establish rigorous SLO targets for performance by the end of the school year. The SLOs were reviewed and approved by both the campus principal and the AISD REACH SLO team. To be approved, SLOs had to meet a series of criteria, including standards for rigor of both performance targets and assessments of student performance. At least one SLO had to target an area of need for the entire class (or course, for secondary

teachers), while the second SLO could target a particular group in the class or course (e.g., ELLs, students scoring below 40). Teachers implemented strategies to meet their SLOs throughout the school year. At the end of the school year, post-assessments were conducted to determine whether students had met the targets established by their teachers. Teachers at non-highest needs campuses received a stipend of $1,000 per SLO met, and teachers at highest needs schools received $1,500 per SLO met. Principals at non-highest needs schools received $3,000 and principals at highest needs schools received $4,500 for facilitating the SLO process, including responsibilities such as meeting with each teacher at the beginning and end of the school year to discuss his or her SLOs, reviewing and approving each SLO, and determining the final status of each SLO at the end of the school year.

School-wide TAKS Growth. The second type of student growth stipend was awarded to all teachers and principals at schools ranked in the top quartile among 40 similar schools statewide, using the state's Comparable Improvement measure of TAKS growth. Teachers were eligible for $2,000 each for growth in reading and math, and principals were eligible for $4,000 each for growth in reading and math. For each subject, half of the stipend was paid for the school year achieved and half was paid for returning the next school year.

Professional Growth

The Professional Growth element included two parts: professional development opportunities in the form of the *Take One!*® and Novice Teacher Mentoring programs for highest needs schools. First, teachers and principals at AISD REACH pilot schools could participate (at no cost) in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) *Take One!*® program.

***Take One!*®.** Participants in AISD worked collaboratively outside of duty hours within cohorts of colleagues from the same or nearby campuses and also examined their own classroom practices through videotaping and self-reflection. While enrolled in the *Take One!*® program, participants submitted one portfolio entry for one certificate area of National Board certification. Although *Take One!*® was designed by the NBPTS to be a stand-alone professional growth opportunity, participants could apply their scores for credit toward the ten portfolio entries required for National Board candidacy, if they did so within 3 years. In addition to the $395 enrollment fee waiver, participants who submitted the portfolio entry received a $200 stipend, and those who received a passing score received an additional $200.

Novice Teacher Mentoring. The second element of professional growth was the Novice Teacher Mentoring program for teachers who were in their first through third year of the profession at the five highest needs campuses. The year 1 mentoring program was an extension of the AISD mentoring program based on the Texas Beginning Educator Support System

(TxBESS). However, rather than mentoring in their spare time, AISD REACH mentors were teachers or instructional specialists or coaches on full- or half-time course release, which allowed them to provide more intensive support to their mentees. Mentees were assigned to mentors based on appropriate matches of teaching area, where possible. The program also allowed mentors, where possible, to be employed part-time as dedicated mentors and part-time as classroom teachers. This arrangement provided a laboratory in which mentee teachers could observe experienced teachers modeling high quality teaching. The goals of the year 1 program were defined as (a) to support teachers in their first, second, and third year of experience so their students learned at high levels and (b) to learn and grow as mentors so the support given could be responsive, effective, and reflective.

Mentors received a stipend of $5,000 above their teacher salary. The stipend initially was intended to reflect $3,000 for service and an additional $2,000 for a successful evaluation at the end of the school year, as determined by a combination of self-ratings and ratings by principals, the program coordinator, and mentees. However, the ratings were not used in year 1, and all mentors received the full stipend due to a variety of circumstances, including the late program start and concerns about the use of the insufficiently validated Mentor Innovation Configuration Assessment Tool (MICAT) instrument to assess mentor performance.

Recruitment and Retention at Highest Needs Schools

The final elements of the pilot program were designed specifically for the five pilot campuses designated as highest needs schools. In addition to participating in the Novice Teacher Mentoring program, all teachers and principals at these schools will be eligible to receive either a retention stipend or a new-to-school stipend (for teachers only), starting in the 2008–2009 school year. Stipends for teachers will be based on years at the campus: 1 through 3 years ($1,000) and 4 or more years ($3,000). Principals will be eligible for $3,000 each year. In 2011–2012, teachers with 7 or more years at the campus will begin to receive $6,000 for returning. These stipends all will be paid in two parts: half at the beginning of the school year and half for completing the school year.

Participants

Four hundred and sixty-four teachers and nine principals participated in year 1 of the AISD REACH pilot. A summary of experience and tenure for participants is presented in Table 1. Teachers at highest needs campuses had significantly fewer average years experience ($t = -3.49$, $p < .01$) and lower average tenure on campus ($t = -2.02$, $p < .05$) than did those at non-highest needs schools.

Table 1. Description of AISD REACH Pilot Teachers From Year 1

	Mean	Standard deviation
Average years experience	**10.34**	**9.73**
Highest needs	9.09	9.64
Non-highest needs	12.37	9.55
Average tenure on campus since 1990	**5.12**	**4.31**
Highest needs	4.22	3.56
Non-highest needs	6.74	4.99

Source. PEIMS 40 and 90 records and AISD human resources records

Note. Average tenure only was available for the number of years since the 1990–1991 school year; thus, the maximum for any one teacher was 17 years on the same campus.

METHODOLOGY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The AISD REACH pilot evaluation objectives included the following: to document the accomplishment of year 1 operational goals, to document the successes and challenges with program implementation, to provide a formative evaluation for each program element, to establish baseline data for pilot and comparison schools, and to define the scope of research for years 2 through 4. Because the REACH pilot program was implemented for the first time in 2007-2008, evaluation objectives focused primarily on implementation and summary information; however, a variety of research questions also were addressed to examine outcomes after year 1.

Data Collection

Information was collected using a variety of district student performance, human resources, and institutional data. These data were supplemented with surveys, focus groups, and interviews throughout the school year, involving teachers, principals, and students. As part of the district's ongoing monitoring, all staff were surveyed about the campus climate late in the Fall 2007 semester, and parents were surveyed early in Spring 2008. Relevant compensation-related items were added to both surveys to gauge familiarity with and attitudes toward incentive-based compensation. *Take One!*® participants and novice teacher mentors also were surveyed about their participation in these programs. Finally, the Spring Employee Coordinated Survey was used to survey pilot participants about the level of support they received from program staff, their general attitudes toward the program, and their support for the program elements. Staff throughout the district also responded to items pertaining to compensation and this pilot program.

A sample of pilot principals, mentors, and teachers participated in focus groups regarding the pilot initiative. Principal focus groups were conducted in January, May, and November; teacher focus groups were held in February and March and October through December; and the mentor focus group was held in May. Finally, interviews were conducted with program staff and members of the steering committee during the summer.

For research purposes, two comparison schools were selected for each pilot campus. Comparisons were chosen based on similar levels of student need, teacher experience, teacher retention, and student TAKS performance. These schools will provide a reference group for pilot school trends that will be monitored over the 4-year pilot period.

Reporting

Feedback was provided to program staff for assistance in making ongoing adjustments to program execution. This formative evaluation reporting was both formal and informal. Formally, two evaluation reports were published, one about the results of principal focus groups and one about the results of teacher focus groups (Malerba, Bush-Richards, and Schmitt, 2008; Schmitt, Malerba, Cornetto, and Bush-Richards, 2008). Informally, program staff were provided with various data and results from ongoing analyses to help with program implementation and decisions. Data also were provided to complete the program's year 1 score card, which documented the accomplishments of year 1 operational objectives.

RESULTS

YEAR 1 PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

Based on data collected through formal means (e.g., interviews, focus groups, surveys) and informal means (e.g., ongoing observation and documentation of key events and processes), the following summary of implementation was prepared. Year 1 of the pilot involved a variety of both successes and challenges. Table 2 summarizes these according to broad categories related to program implementation.

Table 2. Program Implementation Successes and Challenges

	Successes	Challenges
External partnerships	• Commitment by Austin Chamber of Commerce to support the REACH pilot • Engagement of community partners in the planning and execution of the pilot • Guidance and meeting facilitation from consultants	• Negotiation of target-setting with Austin Chamber of Commerce • Disengagement with Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC)
SCI steering committee	• Cooperative effort to include key community stakeholders • Commitment to a program that benefits teachers, principals, and students	• Uneven attendance and participation • Desire expressed by some for more teacher input
District Operations Team (D.O.T.)	• Distribution of program information to central office staff from multiple areas • Problem-solving forum	• Membership not always reflecting the staff necessary to address specific challenges
Core team	• Excellent credentials • Wide range of experiences within education • Small team allowing for flexibility and quick decision making • Commitment to positive changes on campuses for educators and students	• Different locations during year 1 • Embedded staff arrangement • Lack of time available for planning and professional development opportunities
SLOs	• Strongest element of the pilot • Excellent way to capture work teachers were doing in the classroom • High-quality support from SLO team • Credibility of the process boosted by SLO rating and audit	• Data entry system • Confusion regarding provision of resources needed to accomplish SLOs • Teacher-perceived lack of clear timelines, requirements, and program rules • Communication with teachers • Time-consuming SLO rating and audit process

	Successes	Challenges
Mentoring	• Potential program for every campus, not just pilot highest needs campuses	• Late start resulting in confusion and frustration for AISD mentors already in place • Late start resulting in teachers not having the full benefit of intensive mentoring during critical first weeks of teaching • Mentor rating system not used for stipend awards
Take One!®	• High-quality professional development opportunity	• Attrition • Time commitment far beyond participant expectations, stipend too small for the time commitment
Support for the initiative (buy in)	• Collaboration among key internal and external stakeholders from the beginning • Teachers and principal patience with the process, acknowledgement "this is a pilot" • New staff person in Communications hired at the end of year 1 to address program marketing	• Formal efforts to introduce and gain support for REACH in the Austin community focused primarily on external audiences, therefore AISD staff (both campus and CAC staff) lacked awareness of the program • Attitudes of staff not involved in the pilot generally unfavorable toward pay-for-performance, pilot staff attitudes only slightly more positive • Eligibility requirements for year 1 perceived as a hindrance to program implementation
Stipend payouts	• Teacher opportunity to review and correct scheduled stipend amount in advance • Very few mistakes in payment amounts	• Difficulty obtaining human resources data in the format needed • Local newspaper listing of all teachers with stipends earned • Teachers' mixed feelings about whether SLO stipends adequately reflect teaching quality

Source. Fall 2007 and 2008 teacher and principal focus groups, Fall 2007 Teacher Survey, Spring 2008 Employee Coordinated Survey, Spring 2008 *Take One!*® and Mentor surveys, Summer 2008 core team and steering committee interviews

One critical strength of the AISD REACH pilot is that it was developed as part of a joint, cooperative effort among key community stakeholders, including the AISD Board of Trustees,

the Office of the Superintendent, the SCI steering committee, Education Austin, and the Austin Chamber of Commerce. The participation of teachers, in particular, has been invaluable throughout the program's development and implementation. Historically, a fundamental flaw in many differentiated pay programs has been the lack of teacher input (Perkins-Gough, 2007). Results of interviews with pilot staff and steering committee members indicate that ongoing collaboration and communication among multiple key stakeholder groups was critical to the success of the pilot, particularly as challenges arose.

External partnerships

From the outset of the compensation reform project, AISD administrators were committed to partnering with community stakeholders and outside experts in the field. As a result, the planning and execution of the REACH pilot required ongoing collaboration and cooperation among these groups. To facilitate the complex process, AISD contracted with two external organizations, the Community Training and Assessment Center (CTAC) and Augenblick, Palaich, & Associates, Inc. (APA). APA provided the financial analyses and forecasting necessary to develop program elements, and CTAC largely was responsible for guiding the pilot planning process. Both organizations also provided some perspective on program element design based on their experiences with the Denver pay for performance plan ("ProComp").

Both APA and CTAC provided facilitation of steering committee meetings and of the working groups that planned the SLOs and mentor programs. CTAC also advised AISD administrators and program staff about the impact that the pilot would have on existing systems (e.g., data systems and networks, human resource implications). Given that the steering committee included representatives from multiple stakeholder groups, external meeting facilitation was invaluable. Members might have been less comfortable discussing concerns and preferences if policy questions had been posed and responses tallied by a member of the committee. Despite some frustration with the quality of meeting facilitation, most agreed that having an external facilitator was critical.

However, once the school year began and the pilot was underway, the value of the district's partnership with CTAC became less apparent. District personnel quickly began to navigate the pilot process and CTAC lacked sufficient depth to provide additional support. Therefore, although their contract originally had been set to expire on June 30, 2009, the decision was made to end the relationship with CTAC at the end of 2007 so that a portion of the money allocated for external consultants could be redirected to other aspects of the program. APA continued to provide financial consulting services and to facilitate steering committee meetings.

Education Austin was especially critical to the planning and implementation of the program. Despite a national reluctance of teacher unions to support incentive pay programs (Koppich, 2008), Education Austin took a proactive role in developing and supporting the initiative in ways that would shape the program to work with the values of its membership, rather than against them. The Education Austin president's and another representative's participation on the steering committee were influential in obtaining teacher support for the initiative, and provided a valuable perspective to the planning process. Prior to the program's development, Education Austin and AISD administration had negotiated a two-year salary contract for district staff. Although the timing of this contract had been unintentional, it afforded a positive atmosphere in which to finalize the pilot program elements without the political posturing that might otherwise have occurred during that critical time.

The SCI steering committee and REACH program staff were cognizant of the need to keep community partners involved in the program and its progress, due to both the importance of buy-in for any major initiative and also the need for a future tax increase to continue the program's expansion to all schools after the pilot. The REACH director met frequently with a special committee formed by the Austin Chamber of Commerce to discuss the program. One challenge that arose was pressure to establish performance targets before the pilot began. Chamber members felt that overall program targets would provide a clear indication of the success of the pilot, whereas district staff found it difficult to set goals without historical information, particularly with respect to how well the program elements would perform together. As a compromise, the district agreed to set a few goals, mostly operational in nature, for the first year. A report card was created to display the results.

Finally, AISD's commitment to rigorous investigation of the pilot led to a partnership with the National Center on Performance Incentives (NCPI) at Vanderbilt University. The district contracted with NCPI to conduct an external evaluation of the REACH pilot. NCPI is a nationally recognized, multi-disciplinary agency, and also is responsible for the evaluation of the Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG). NCPI activities during year 1 were minimal, limited to principal and teacher interviews and a spring survey.

SCI Steering Committee

The SCI steering committee was charged with making policy decisions for the pilot. During interviews, members indicated the composition of the committee was excellent and members were committed to this program because they truly believed it would benefit children. However, several interviewees indicated the teachers' voice on the committee was not as strong as the interviewees would prefer. Prior to year 1 of the pilot, as the work of developing the pilot expanded, the committee began to meet weekly. During interviews,

members indicated frequent meetings were critical to program success because they kept the work moving and in the forefront of everyone's mind.

Several challenges arose for the operations of the SCI steering committee during year 1. One significant challenge was uneven attendance at meetings. Because the steering committee was made up of community members as well as district staff, full attendance often was not achieved and some members attended more regularly than did others. As one member explained, "We're competing with everyone's calendars." Lack of regular attendance by all members led to other challenges, too, including lack of continuity from one meeting to the next and time spent reviewing previous meeting outcomes for absent members. More importantly, inconsistent attendance made it difficult for the committee to move beyond discussions to decision making because their protocol required a quorum before any final decisions could be made.

District Operations Team (D.O.T.)

The D.O.T. began meeting biweekly at the start of the school year and continued to do so through the fall semester. The committee of central office administrators and core team members discussed implementation challenges that pertained to areas of responsibility for those on the D.O.T. For example, the SLO team described challenges related to the district's Austin Instructional Management System (AIMS) data system, which were addressed by the director of Management Information Systems. These meetings were useful for distributing pilot information to key staff in a variety of central office areas and for vetting implementation strategies. Policy issues often were discussed in the D.O.T. meetings prior to the presentation of policy proposals for consideration by the SCI steering committee.

Although the D.O.T. served as a critical resource for program staff, the committee was unable to address some implementation challenges in an efficient manner. For example, the D.O.T. membership did not include appropriate staff from the payroll department who could provide solutions to issues related to the process of preparing and distributing REACH stipend payments. As time passed, the D.O.T. was less able to assist with the types of implementation challenges that existed, and the meetings were discontinued until its membership could be revised. Ultimately, the D.O.T. was no longer necessary because program staff became integrated into ongoing district operations and assumed roles within other existing central office committees designed to address issues related to their work.

Core Team

Year 1 marked not only the first year of the REACH Pilot, but also the first year of the Office of Strategic Compensation. The office quickly expanded from two staff (i.e., director and secretary) to include three additional members of what became known as the core team.

During interviews, staff and SCI steering committee members reported the choices made for the core team were excellent and the team generally functioned well during year 1. During year 1, the SLO program was led and supported by two staff members, and the Novice Teacher Mentoring and *Take One!*® programs were managed and supported by one person funded half time by the Office of Strategic Compensation. The three members of the core team brought unique strengths to the program and a wide range of experiences within the field of education. The small size of the team afforded a high degree of flexibility and allowed for quick decision making. In addition, the team's commitment to bringing positive changes to campuses, both for educators and for students, was evident in their commitment and dedication to their work.

Results from the Employee Coordinated Survey, administered in late Spring 2007, indicate pilot administrators were slightly more favorable than were pilot teachers about the support received from SCI staff, but the majority of both administrators (59%) and teachers (68%) agreed or strongly agreed they were satisfied with the support they received (Table 3).

Table 3. Satisfaction With Support From REACH Pilot Staff

I am satisfied with the support I receive from the Strategic Compensation Initiative staff.	Number and percentage of pilot administrators (mean = 3.0)	Number and percentage of pilot teachers (mean = 2.8)
Strongly disagree	1 (6%)	16 (6%)
Disagree	1 (6%)	49 (21%)
Agree	7 (41%)	120 (52%)
Strongly agree	3 (18%)	37 (16%)
Don't know or N/A	5 (29%)	11 (5%)

Source. 2007–2008 AISD Employee Coordinated Survey
Note. Means were computed based on a response scale ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 4. Responses of don't know and N/A were not used for mean computation.

The core team experienced several notable challenges. First, the team was geographically dispersed during year 1; the SLO team and the facilitator for the mentoring program and *Take One!*® were housed at the Professional Development Campus (PDC) and the director and secretary were housed in a small room at the Carruth Administrative Center (CAC). Weekly team meetings rotated between PDC and CAC and often were scheduled on short notice to accommodate the schedules of staff working on different campuses. Although most of the core team made frequent campus visits, the lack of opportunity for spontaneous, informal communication among the team was disadvantageous. Staff also were required to attend steering committee meetings and meetings of the DOT; therefore, travel time among facilities was substantial.

Second, although their salaries were funded by the Office of Strategic Compensation, the SLO team and the facilitator for the mentoring program and *Take One!*® were embedded in other departments; in other words, these staff members were in dual reporting roles. The SLO team technically was part of the Curriculum and Instruction department and reported to the executive director of Curriculum. The facilitator of the mentoring program and *Take One!*® reported to the director of the PDC. The rationale for this arrangement was sound: embedding staff would help to integrate the work of the pilot across the organization; embedded staff would have access to relevant information and policies, would be able to communicate with others about the pilot, and would be able to anticipate and potentially avoid challenges because of their connections. However, functionally, the arrangement was complicated, particularly for reporting and appraisals. The joint appraisal arrangement was awkward especially for the SLO team because the supervisors within Curriculum and Instruction were not privy to the day-to-day work the team was doing.

Third, the intense focus on immediately developing and implementing the program upon hire meant the time available for professional development opportunities and process development within the core team was minimal. The core team was hired just a few weeks before they began working, first on the initial pitch and then on the SLO training. The rapid pace required of staff for program implementation left many feeling their own roles were not well defined yet and that more professional development opportunities and more conversations were needed about their own goals, span of control, and office processes and policies.

SLO Program

The two staff members leading and supporting the SLO program were a former high school English teacher/department chair and a former elementary school administrator. In addition to strong academic backgrounds (both were National Board certified teachers [NBCTs]), both were members of the appointed working group that designed the SLO program. The SLO team trained teachers and principals in the development and implementation of SLOs, including assistance with the AIMS for data access and analysis. The SLO team also managed all processes related to collecting, scoring, and tracking the progress of all SLOs.

During interviews with staff and SCI steering committee members, SLOs were cited as the strongest element of the REACH pilot, and most stated it was the piece of which they were the most proud. In particular, they felt the SLOs were an excellent way to capture the work teachers were doing in the classroom, and that the training and support for teachers and principals was of high quality. In addition, during the Spring 2008 focus groups, pilot teachers were positive about the notion of goal setting and its impact on their students, and also

expressed widespread appreciation for the support they received from the SLO team. The SLO team also indicated the most rewarding and meaningful part of their work involved working one-on-one and in small groups with teachers to develop and execute their SLOs.

Creating SLOs. The process of executing SLOs, however, was challenging. From the beginning, problems occurred with the data entry system teachers used to submit their SLOs. For example, the language and format of the web interface did not match the language and format of the paper worksheet teachers used to create their SLOs, and this led to much confusion and frustration for teachers. Second, at times, the system was unavailable, unreliable, or both, and some teachers complained of long wait times and difficulty accessing the site. In addition to problems with the data system, teachers expressed frustration with documentation requirements and in general with the amount of time they had to work on SLOs.

As part of the documentation required, teachers were asked to include information about the kind of resources and support they would need to achieve their SLOs. Program staff (i.e., the SLO team with the assistance of the facilitator of the mentoring program and *Take One!*®) worked to provide some resources (e.g., books, testing materials, paper, other materials), including materials from their own personal libraries. Principals were expected to address their teachers' material requests, and many did so; however, they did not do so in every case. This was due to a variety of reasons, including the timeline needed for planning of professional development opportunities, the lack of campus funds for certain materials, and the principals' desire for teachers to use other methods for accomplishing their SLOs. However, many teachers expected program staff to provide additional resources not met through campus means, and reported frustration with the lack of response to requests they believed would be met. Teachers and program staff were disappointed the program budget allowed for only minimal materials support and for staff support that did not provide more than assistance with the development of high-quality SLOs. The original intent for program staff to elicit support from the PDC to address common teacher requests did not materialize due to the lack of consistent leadership and staff at the PDC during 2007–2008.

Teachers also were frustrated by what they perceived to be a lack of clear timelines, requirements, and program rules (see Schmitt et al., 2008). Fortunately, in spite of their frustration, most teachers acknowledged that many of these problems occurred because it was the first year of a pilot program. Most understood that program staff were working hard to resolve the issues, although some teachers were less positive than were other teachers about the potential for resolution to some of the problems they encountered. For example, one issue teachers encountered during the target-setting process was the requirement to establish one performance target for all students in the class. This made target setting particularly challenging for those with students already performing at the high end of the spectrum and for

those whose students demonstrated a broad range of performance at the beginning of the school year. Teachers reported frustration with this issue and with the challenge of computing final results based on the performance scores of students who may not have been in their classrooms throughout the school year.

SLO training. The SLO team scheduled four visits to each pilot campus for SLO training, and each teacher had at least two opportunities to meet with the team. Training sessions first focused on discussing the purpose of the SLOs, reviewing data (including a tutorial on how to access the data), and providing guidance about how to identify campus- and classroom-level needs when setting SLOs. In later sessions, most teachers had the opportunity to discuss their own SLOs with the team, and many teachers used email and phone calls to the team to discuss questions about their SLOs. SLO training was not mandatory and was required only at the principal's discretion. Approximately 87% of teachers attended at least one training, and 9% attended three or more training sessions.

SLO review and approval. Concerns before the pilot began about the rigor and consistency of SLOs across campuses led to two important but cumbersome review processes: SLO ratings and the SLO audit. The month-long SLO rating process required two independent raters to review each SLO and its supporting materials and score them on a rubric. SLOs that lacked rigor or were problematic in other ways were returned to the teacher for revision and resubmission to the principal and SLO team. Thirty-two percent of teachers were required to revise an SLO, representing 27% of the 934 total SLOs. The largest percentage of revisions (38%) were required because teachers failed to meet the "75% minimum" requirement for students who would meet the SLO. Other reasons for revisions included duplicate SLOs (21%), confusing the "objective" with the "performance target" (19%), no reference to the performance level expected of students (15%), lack of rigor (6%), and assessment issues (1%).

SLO audit. The SLO audit occurred after all teachers submitted their final materials, including rosters, grades, and exam booklets. About half (54%) of SLOs were randomly selected to be audited. The audit took the SLO team approximately 3 weeks to complete and involved a review of the pre- and post-assessments (i.e., matching tests to grade sheets) and a confirmation of the SLO verification sheet (i.e., the official record of whether the teacher met or did not meet the SLO).

When a discrepancy was found, the auditor first contacted the principal to discuss the results of the audit. Eight SLO decisions were overturned as a result of the audit, all because fewer than 75% of students demonstrated the required growth. In two cases, teachers simply miscalculated or mis-recorded scores. However, in five cases, teachers failed to count students in their class who had scored so well on their pre-assessment they were unable to meet the growth requirement. For example, if the SLO stated that "75% of students will improve by 10

points on the posttest," the teacher omitted students who scored above 90% on their pretests when calculating the percentage of students who met the target. However, under the SLO guidelines, 75% of *all* students were required to meet the learning objective in order for the teacher to receive compensation.

The seven teachers whose SLOs were overturned received a letter from the director of SCI informing them of the decision. However, prior to the receipt of the letter, SLO staff, due to their credibility as experts, their relationships with teachers, and their role as auditors, were required to contact the teachers by phone to inform them their SLOs had been overturned. During their interviews, the SLO team indicated this was a stressful process, particularly because they felt it might undermine the trust needed to continue relationships they were building with teachers and principals.

SLO stipends. SLO stipends were paid out during Summer 2008. Following the audit, a final list of SLO payouts was compiled, and all pilot teachers received a notice in advance of their check, detailing the stipends they had earned. This letter served as a means of verifying the accuracy of stipends awarded and as a way to avoid any surprises. The notice also included a letter from the superintendent thanking them for their participation in the first year of the pilot. During the Fall 2008 focus groups, teachers had mixed feelings about the SLO stipends and about the payout process. Some teachers felt the SLO stipends were wonderful and were very excited to receive them. Some reported teachers at their campuses were surprised by who did and did not get stipends, and felt earning stipends did not adequately reflect the quality of teaching at their schools. Several teachers, especially those who did not receive a stipend, expressed frustration with the notices that preceded the stipend checks and suggested they felt it was "insulting" to be reminded they would not be receiving any money.

Novice Teacher Mentoring Program

During year 1 of the pilot, novice teacher mentors were supervised by the district's National Board program manager, a National Board certified teacher (NBCT) who was funded half time by the Office of Strategic Compensation. Nine half-time mentors were assigned up to 5 mentees each, and 4 full-time mentors were assigned up to 10 mentees each, to whom they provided extensive support when the program was implemented after the start of the school year. Focus group participants of all experience levels praised the program; many expressed regret the program was not available during their early years of teaching, and many indicated the program would be an important part of supporting the professional growth and morale of new teachers. Several participants indicated they believed the mentor program should be expanded beyond highest needs schools, and even beyond the REACH pilot. Members of the

SCI steering committee also emphasized the centrality of the mentoring program to successful retention efforts on highest needs campuses.

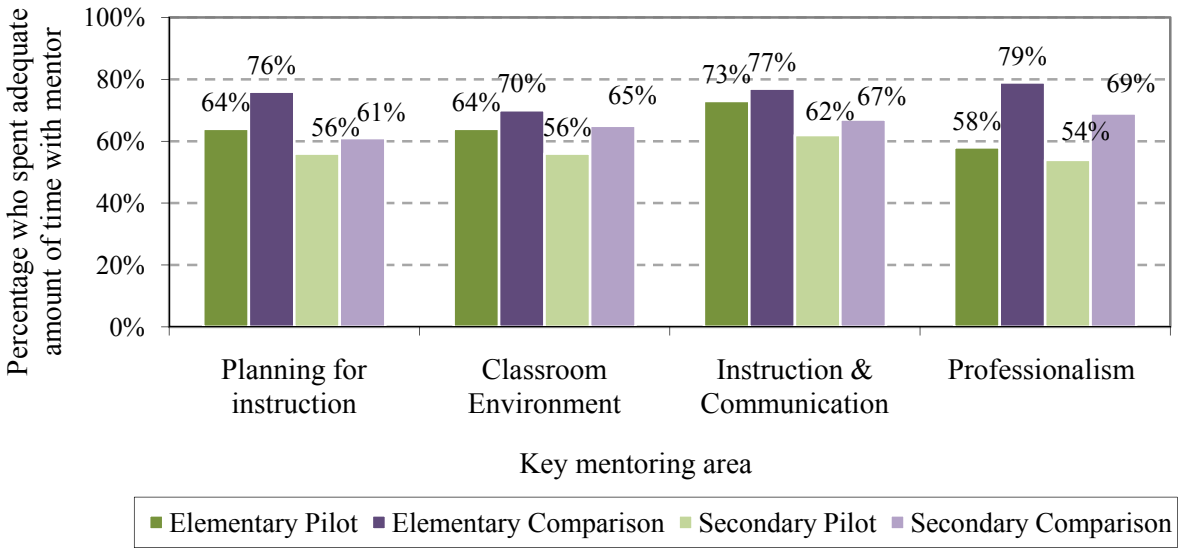
The primary challenge to implementing the Novice Teacher Mentoring program during year 1 was time. Schools did not vote to participate until the beginning of the school year, which meant mentors could not be hired until after that time. Principals were asked whether they wanted to implement this program element during year 1, given the late start, and they decided the potential benefits outweighed the challenges involved with hiring staff after school had started. Mentors for each highest needs school were selected by a committee that included both the campus principal and the program coordinator. To avoid creating teacher vacancies by pulling already-placed teachers into the newly created mentor positions, the program employed current half-time teachers or instructional specialists and coaches as half-time mentors, or employed recent retirees when possible. After they were selected, mentors were trained in the TxBESS system by the program coordinator and were assigned to mentees. Despite an original intent for mentors to be employed half-time as dedicated mentors and half-time as classroom teachers, the hiring challenges did not afford many opportunities for this arrangement. Only a few mentors maintained classroom teaching responsibilities that allowed their mentees to observe on a regular basis.

Mentors attended half-day training sessions with the program coordinator every other week to discuss topics such as principles of adult learning, coaching, mentoring, delivering professional learning, differentiation of instruction, assessment, and methods for approaching crucial and difficult conversations. Mentors also received training regarding the TxBESS and the Teacher Appraisal Protocol (TAP) instrument, a collaborative tool that mentors used with novice teachers to observe and examine their teaching practices, establish teaching goals, and monitor progress toward meeting those goals. Mentors provided critical assistance to mentees on both a regular and an ad hoc basis, ensuring that mentee teachers received the essential elements defined by TxBESS and received additional support described in the district-developed MICAT. Mentors also assisted their mentees with the SLO process, when the hiring timeline permitted, and attended professional learning opportunities with their mentees, such as the district's Classroom Management 2 training course.

Mentors started working on campuses as early as October and as late as January. For this reason, some novice teachers were assigned an AISD mentor in the beginning of the year, and then reassigned to a REACH mentor a few months later. Some retained their AISD mentor and also were supported by the REACH mentor. At one campus, the third year teachers (and about one third of the second year teachers) did not receive mentors because a suitable candidate could not be located. The timing of mentor placement did have some negative consequences for teachers during the fall semester, particularly with respect to the amount of

time novice teachers were able to spend with their mentors during the critical beginning weeks of the school year. As expected, data from the 2007–2008 AISD teacher survey, collected in November 2007, suggest that fewer teachers at REACH pilot campuses than at comparison schools or at other AISD campuses spent an adequate amount of time with their mentors working in key areas (Figure 2). Alternatively, this finding could reflect higher expectations on the part of REACH teachers, compared with other teachers, for their mentoring quality.

Figure 2. Teachers Who Reported Spending an Adequate Amount of Time With Their Mentor Working in Key Areas



Source. 2007–2008 AISD Teacher Survey
Notes. Percentages represent respondents who indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they spent an adequate amount of time working on each area.

Take One!® Program

During year 1 of the pilot, the *Take One!*® program was supervised by the same half-time core team member who coordinated the Novice Teacher Mentoring program. District NBCTs were hired as program cohort facilitators and paid $1,000 (as part of the AISD NBCT stipend, not out of the AISD REACH budget).

Participating teachers were organized into cohorts based on employment at the same or nearby schools, and cohorts met regularly to discuss and reflect upon the skills and processes necessary to analyze their teaching practices and to articulate why and how they succeeded as teachers. Discussions helped teachers plan and achieve specific learning outcomes and adapt their teaching practices to the needs of individual students. Participants devoted between 24 and 40 hours of common time with their cohorts in addition to time spent on self-study and the creation of a video portfolio entry.

The portfolio entries included footage of teachers implementing classroom lessons, along with footage of their own reflection on and analysis of what happened, the rationale for those events and processes, and what they learned about themselves professionally that could help them teach more effectively. Entries were submitted at the end of the school year for scoring by the NBPTS, and participants were informed of their scores during November 2008.

During Spring 2008, participants of the *Take One!*® program completed an online survey about their experiences and opinions of the program. Twenty-nine participants responded to the survey, 55% of whom made it all the way to submitting a final portfolio. Most of the remaining respondents made it through most of the program, and some were program facilitators. Of those who did not finish the program, many said they could not because the program was not what they expected, or because of scheduling or personal conflicts.

A strong majority of the respondents reported feeling their principal (68%) and *Take One!*® facilitator (71%) were supportive of their participation. They also reported the most useful aspects of the program were having a NBCT as the facilitator of the group, learning about the scoring of portfolio entries, and engaging as a campus-based professional learning community around the *Take One!*® program. Some suggested the time commitment could be reduced by limiting the amount of material that introduces participants to the requirements for National Board certification.

In addition to the time required, participants said the availability of video equipment was a significant challenge. Interviews with teachers who participated and those who did not suggested that the small stipends of $200 for portfolio submission and $200 for receiving a passing score did not equate to the time and effort required for the *Take One!*® program. Some indicated they would be more likely to participate in the future for a larger stipend.

Support for the Initiative

Goldhaber (2008), a leading researcher of educational reform, stated that "the implementation of and support for pay reform programs may be at least as important in determining the success of a reform as the specifics of a program design" (p.19). Formal efforts during year 1 to introduce and gain support for the REACH pilot in the Austin community focused primarily on the external community and partners. The focus on the internal AISD community was informal, with an emphasis on ensuring REACH staff and others involved in the pilot were engaged in ongoing conversations with key departments (e.g., MIS, Curriculum, PDC, and Program Evaluation).

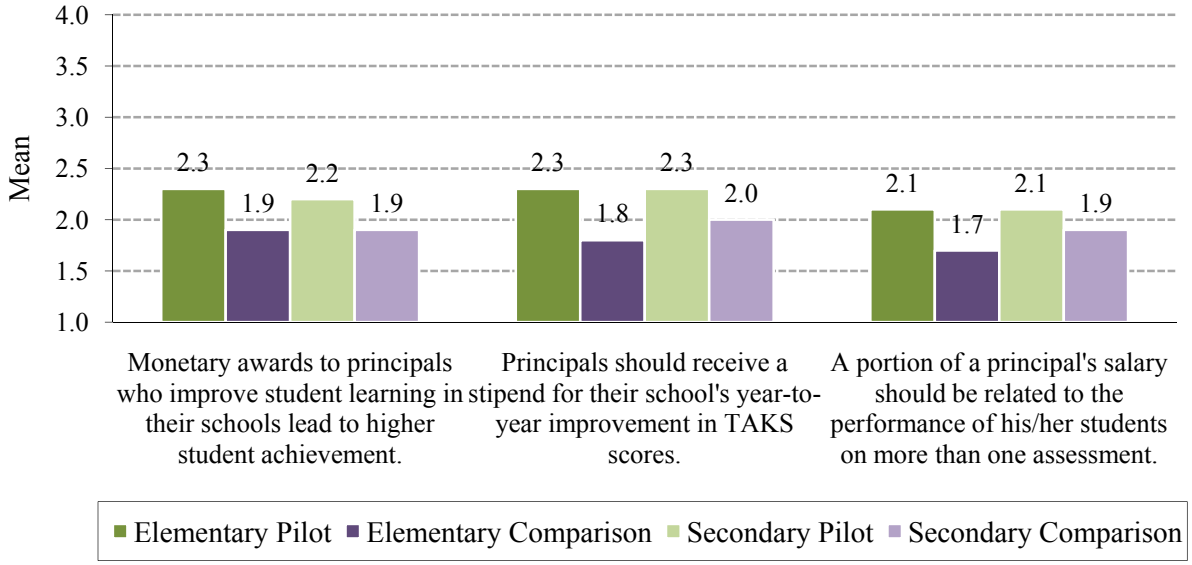
Teacher perceptions of the REACH initiative are critical to its success as an incentive to attract and retain teachers. Research suggests that incentive-based pay must be distributed in a way that is perceived as rewarding those who deserve it, and also that initiatives perceived as

fair can promote high-quality teacher retention. For example, employees who leave their positions because they believe merit pay is inequitably distributed among all employees tend to be the organization's best performers; this can adversely affect an organization's productivity. Terpstra and Honoree (2005) studied the merit pay and employee retention of 490 faculty members at 135 colleges and universities across the United States. Results indicated faculty members who received the same merit compensation as colleagues who were lower performers were more likely than those who did not to quit their positions and seek a position in which they would receive higher rewards.

Attitudes toward the initiative remain a challenge. The Fall 2007 AISD Teacher Survey asked teachers to reflect on various types of teacher and principal compensation. Figures 3 and 4 on the following page display mean responses to items that asked teachers about their attitudes toward financial incentives for teachers and principals that are tied to student performance and to working in hard-to-staff schools. Respondents felt very strongly that teachers should receive stipends for working in hard-to-staff schools. However, attitudes toward incentives tied to student performance were not as positive; all means for these items were below 3.0 on a scale from 1 to 4.

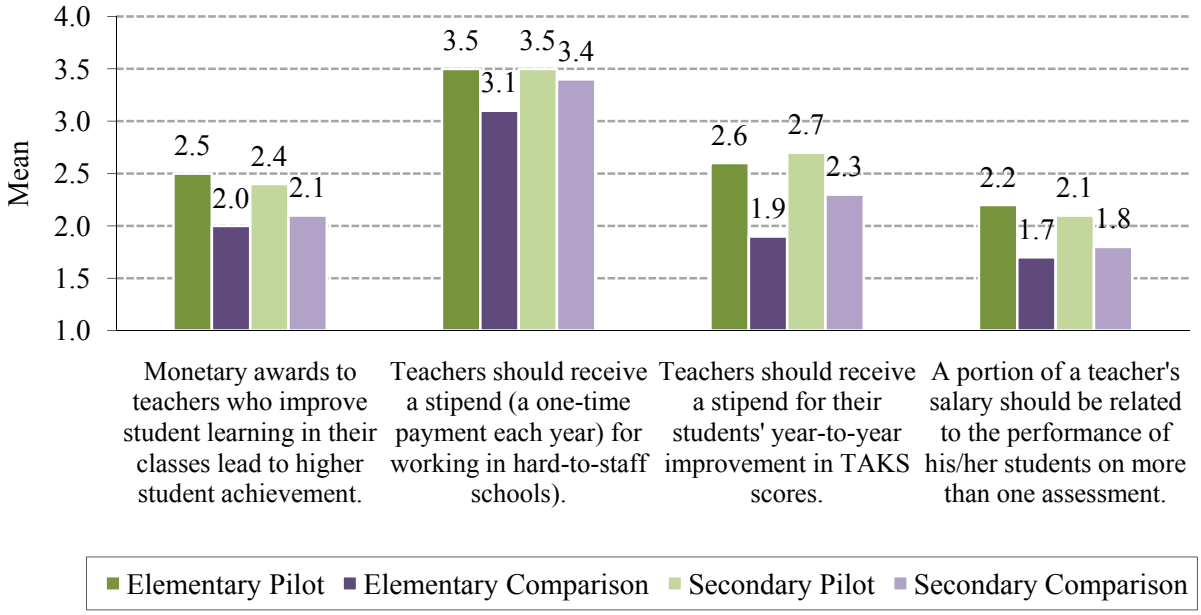
This indicates that, on average, teachers were more likely to disagree with these statements than to agree with them. However, a clear difference was found between the pilot schools and their research comparison schools in terms of teachers' attitudes toward these performance incentives. Teachers from pilot schools reported more favorable attitudes toward performance-based incentives, and all of these mean differences were statistically significant. This is an important finding because it indicates the pitch message was successful on these campuses. In general, teachers on campuses that voted to participate in the pilot were more favorable toward incentive pay than were teachers on campuses that did not participate. However, it is also important to note that although teachers at pilot campuses reported more favorable attitudes than did their counterparts, they remained skeptical a few months into the pilot.

Figure 3. Attitudes Toward Performance-based Compensation for Teachers



Source. AISD Teacher Survey, 2007–2008
Note. Response options ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

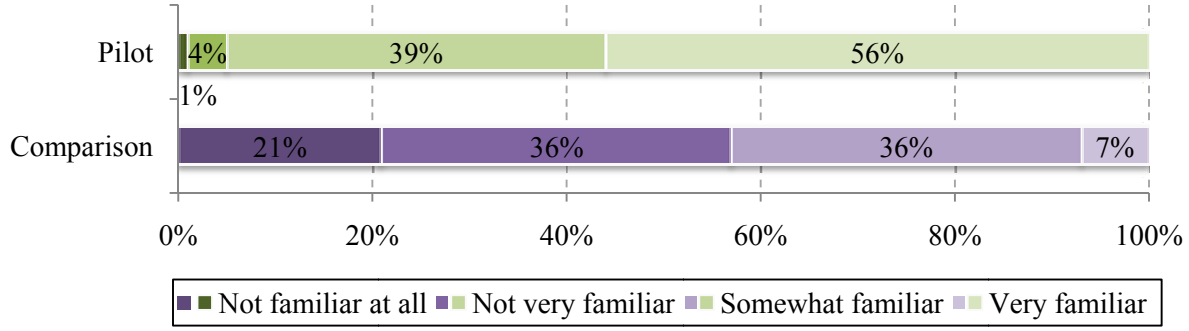
Figure 4. Attitudes Toward Performance-based Compensation for Principals



Source. AISD Teacher Survey, 2007–2008
Note. Response options ranged from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4).

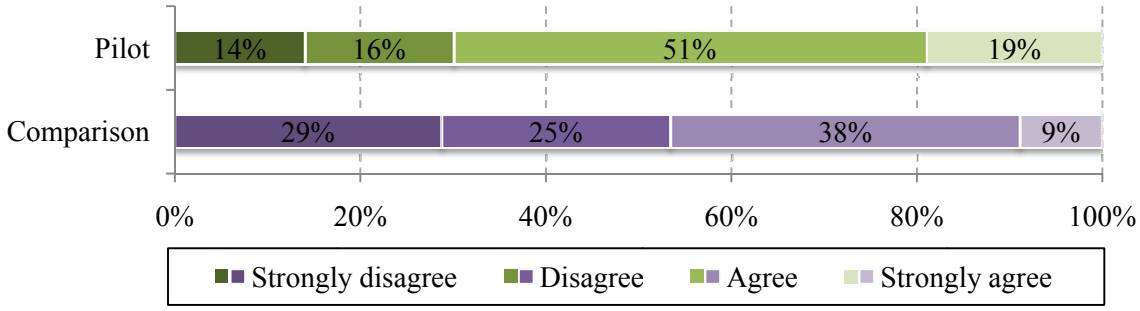
Later in the school year, the Spring 2008 Employee Coordinated Survey asked AISD employees about their familiarity with the AISD pilot and about whether or not they believed pay-for-performance was a good idea. Not surprisingly, pilot teachers reported being significantly more familiar with the initiative than did comparison teachers, and were significantly more likely to agree it was a good idea (Figure 5). Most pilot campus teachers reported they were somewhat or very familiar with the pilot, with many reporting they at least somewhat agree it was a good idea (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Teachers' Familiarity With Strategic Compensation at Pilot and Comparison Schools



Source. 2007–2008 Employee Coordinated Survey

Figure 6. Teachers' Agreement That Pay for Performance Was a Good Idea at Pilot and Comparison Schools



Source. 2007–2008 Employee Coordinated Survey

The majority (70%) of teachers at pilot campuses agreed or strongly agreed that pay for performance was a good idea, while only about half of teachers at comparisons schools agreed. This suggests participation in the program has encouraged more favorable attitudes toward that concept, and may indicate that teachers generally had a positive experience in the pilot. However, it is notable that by the end of Spring 2008, nearly one third of teachers on pilot campuses reported they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the concept of pay-for-performance. This result was echoed in written comments given by some teachers on the survey, including some who proposed different ways the district might allocate program

funding. The lack of agreement among teachers about whether or not the program was a good idea represents a significant challenge for the future of the pilot. It is possible that before teachers can be persuaded to believe in the particular elements of the REACH program, they first must be convinced incentive pay for teachers and principals is a good idea. Alternatively, teacher opinions about strategic compensation methods may hinge on their experiences with the pilot program. (A comparison of familiarity and attitudes toward strategic compensation for campus and central office personnel can be found in Appendix B.)

Additional findings suggest pilot teachers are more "on board" with the program than are their comparison peers, but that a large percentage of pilot teachers still do not agree with the use of Student Growth program elements (e.g., meeting teacher-developed student growth targets or performance growth of a school's students on TAKS). Teachers on pilot and comparison campuses generally believed similarly about the reasons teachers should be compensated; however, a few differences were evident. Table 4 provides a list of the reasons for compensation about which pilot and comparison schools differed by at least 10 percentage points. These reasons were similar to the reasons for rewarding teachers in the REACH pilot. Still, only half or fewer than half of pilot teachers endorsed most of these reasons.

Table 4. Influences on Teachers' Pay Endorsed by Pilot and Comparison Teachers

Which of the following should influence a teacher's pay (salary, bonuses, stipends, etc.)?	Percentage of pilot teachers endorsing (n = 271)	Percentage of comparison teachers endorsing (n = 603)
Meeting teacher-developed student growth targets	48%	32%
Meeting school-wide performance targets	43%	29%
Performance growth of school's students on TAKS (or other state-mandated test)	28%	17%
Mentoring less experienced peers	50%	62%
Obtaining a master's degree in a subject area field (e.g., mathematics) or in education	58%	68%

Source. 2007–2008 Employee Coordinated Survey

When teachers were asked what additional factors should influence teachers' salaries, they mentioned attendance, coaching athletics, stipends reflecting the rising cost of living and importance of the job, and after-school hours and additional duty hours. National Board certification frequently was mentioned as something that should influence teacher pay, which reflects the *Take One!*® component of the REACH pilot.

In addition to mixed feelings about pay for performance, another challenge to teacher support for the initiative was the lack of eligibility for campus assistant principals, instructional specialists and coaches, and librarians. Findings from teacher and principal focus groups

indicated many teachers and principals felt uncomfortable using these staff as resources to support their SLOs because they were not eligible to receive any monetary compensation. Teachers and principals felt these instructional leaders could have helped them with planning and implementation of strategies, but did not approach them for assistance due to feelings of guilt about the perceived unfairness.

Stipend Payouts

After final SLO performance had been determined and verified, participants each received a letter from the superintendent thanking them for their hard work and celebrating the completion of year 1. The letter was accompanied by an attachment describing the exact stipend(s) that would be received as a result of SLOs in 2007–2008. Letters were mailed more than 2 weeks in advance of the scheduled stipend release, which allowed teachers time to call the hotline with any discrepancies so district staff could correct the few stipend amounts that had not been listed correctly. This process allowed all parties to be prepared for the eventual stipend payouts. Similar procedures also were implemented with the New to School and Retention stipends that were issued in October and the Schoolwide Growth stipends that were issued in December. The advance notification system in particular was helpful for these stipends, which required verification of human resources data (e.g., years of experience and campus of employment). Although relatively few errors occurred in the original stipend listings, the file structure of human resources information could not always provide the necessary data for the relevant time period; thus, several teachers were able to use the advance notification process to correct these errors.

When 2007–2008 Schoolwide Growth stipends were paid in December 2008, teachers and principals were overwhelmingly positive about these stipends. One principal said that before these stipends were announced, teachers were asking how they could "get out of (REACH)" and if they could "give the money back and get out of it," but the news their school had made Quartile One changed everyone's attitude for the better. Several teachers and principals said the Schoolwide Growth stipends should be paid to all AISD schools, not just those in the REACH pilot.

The district faced one major challenge to stipend payouts. Due to the public information laws in Texas, the district was required to release the names and stipend amounts for all participating teachers and principals to the local newspaper. Although teachers and principals had been notified of this likelihood near the beginning of the school year, many still felt uncomfortable and were upset by seeing their names and stipend awards listed publicly. District staff made efforts to remind the public that results reflected only the first year of a pilot program, and that information gleaned from year 1 would be used to refine the program.

District staff cautioned against believing a teacher who did not receive a stipend was not a good teacher. Nonetheless, teachers reported wishing their stipend awards had not been published, and some did not appear to understand that the district was required under the Texas Public Information Act (Government Code, Chapter 552) to release this information.

STUDENT GROWTH

Results for Student Learning Objectives

SLO performance. The majority of teachers (83%) met at least one of their SLOs, with percentages ranging from 50% at O. Henry to 100% at Sims (Table 5). Nearly two thirds of all pilot teachers met both their SLOs (64%), and percentages of those meeting neither SLO ranged from 0% at Sims to 50% at O. Henry, with most schools at or less than 21%.

Table 5. Summary of SLOs Met by Campus

Campus	Teachers who met both SLOs	Teachers who met only one SLO	Teachers who did not meet an SLO	Teachers who met at least one SLO
Barton Hills	76%	20%	4%	96%
Hart	60%	21%	19%	81%
Menchaca	70%	21%	9%	91%
Rodriguez	84%	13%	3%	97%
Sims	88%	13%	0%	100%
Sunset Valley	58%	28%	14%	86%
Dobie	71%	8%	21%	79%
O. Henry	37%	13%	50%	50%
Lanier	58%	25%	17%	83%
Total	64%	19%	17%	83%

Source. SLO database

Seventy-six percent of teachers who wrote reading or math SLOs met their target (Table 6 on the following page), which was similar to the percentage for those who wrote SLOs for other subjects (72%).

Table 6. Teachers Who Met or Attempted but Did Not Meet at Least One SLO in Reading, Math, or Other Subjects

Campus	Reading		Math		Other	
	Met	Did not meet	Met	Did not meet	Met	Did not meet
Barton Hills	88%	12%	71%	29%	86%	14%
Hart	71%	29%	68%	32%	76%	24%
Menchaca	93%	7%	71%	29%	87%	13%
Rodriguez	85%	15%	94%	6%	95%	5%
Sims	96%	4%	92%	8%	92%	8%
Sunset Valley	88%	13%	63%	37%	67%	33%
Dobie	83%	17%	82%	18%	61%	39%
O. Henry	22%	78%	46%	54%	48%	52%
Lanier	48%	52%	77%	23%	77%	23%
Total	76%	24%	76%	24%	72%	28%

Source. SLO database

SLOs and TAKS. To examine the relationship between SLO performance and TAKS performance, a series of analyses was conducted. To examine whether teachers appropriately selected the subject(s) to target with their SLOs, the first analysis compared the average 2008 TAKS scale scores for teachers according to their SLO selection and performance. At the elementary school level, students of teachers who did not attempt a reading SLO had higher reading scale scores than did those with teachers who attempted or met a reading SLO (Table 7). This could indicate that teachers whose students did not demonstrate a need in reading did not choose to set a reading SLO. In other words, evidence suggests elementary teachers correctly identified whether it was appropriate for them to establish an SLO in reading. No difference was found at the secondary level for 2008 TAKS reading.

Table 7. ANOVA for TAKS Scale Score Means and SLOs Attempted in Reading

		Mean 2008 TAKS reading scale score	*SD*	*F*	Sig.
Elementary	**Met at least 1 reading SLO** [(a)]	2218.54[c]	75.87	7.33	<.01
	Attempted but did not meet reading SLO [(b)]	2156.56[c]	97.07		
	Did not attempt reading SLO [(c)]	2276.87[ab]	103.10		
Secondary	**Met at least 1 reading SLO**	2203.40	104.09	0.711	n.s
	Attempted but did not meet reading SLO	2240.07	129.22		

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records
Note. Superscripts indicate which means are significantly different.

No difference in 2008 TAKS math scale score was found at the elementary level for those who met, attempted but did not meet, or did not attempt a math SLO (Table 8 on the following page). This could reflect a relationship between math SLOs and student performance in math (see results for TAKS growth analyses that follow), such that those attempting a math

SLO were able to raise scale scores to the level of students whose teachers did not originally perceive they needed a math SLO. At the secondary level, where teachers typically are subject-specific and therefore automatically write SLOs in their subject area, no difference was found in the 2008 TAKS scale scores for teachers who met and did not meet at least one of their SLOs in reading or math.

Table 8. ANOVA for TAKS Scale Score Means and SLOs Attempted in Math

		Mean 2008 TAKS math scale score	*SD*	*F*	Sig.
Elementary	**Met at least 1 math SLO**	2246.68	118.52	.958	n.s.
	Attempted but did not meet math SLO	2208.52	125.23		
	Did not attempt math SLO	2194.36	78.42		
Secondary	**Met at least 1 math SLO**	2183.12	148.26	.564	n.s.
	Attempted but did not meet math SLO	2136.15	160.86		

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

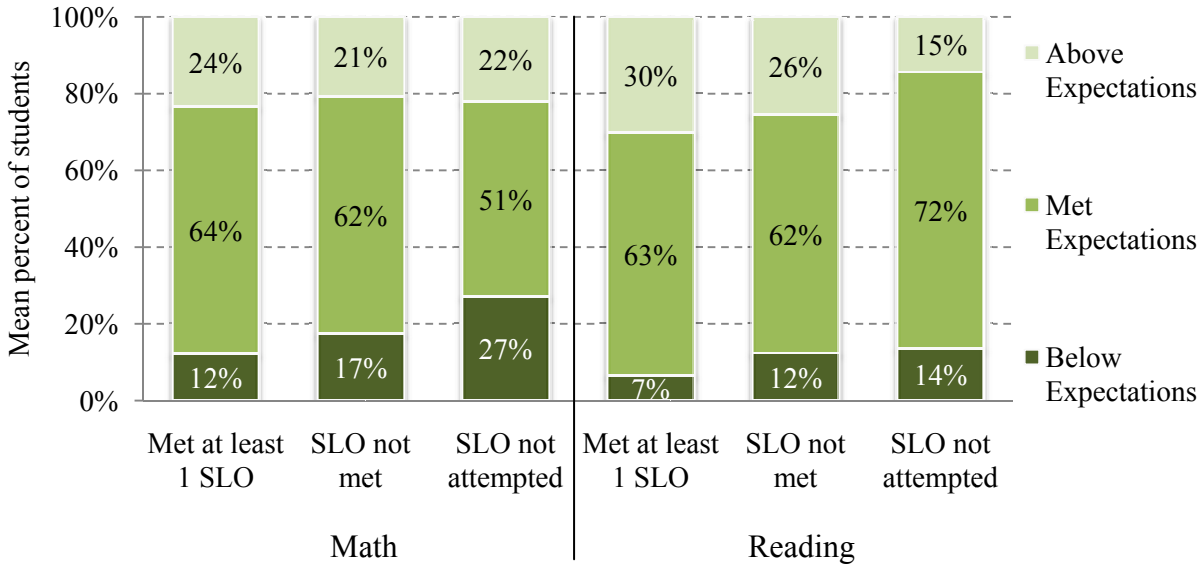
While the analyses described above examine student performance in 2008 only, additional analyses explored the growth of teachers' students relative to what the TEA published for expected growth on TAKS from one year to the next, according to students' 2007 TAKS raw scores for each subject area, grade level, and language of test administration (see *Technical Digest for TAKS 2006–2007*). Based on these characteristics, an appropriate equation was applied to each student's 2007 TAKS score to compute an expected 2008 score. Then, using published conditional standard errors of measurement, a confidence interval was computed around each student's expected 2008 TAKS scale score to indicate the range of 2008 TAKS scores that would be expected. Finally, each student's 2008 scale score was compared with the expected range to determine whether he or she performed below, above, or as expected in 2008. The percentage of students performing below, above, or as expected in 2008 was computed for each teacher with at least 10 students testing in reading or math.

Tests for significance indicate that pilot teachers who met at least one math SLO had a significantly lower percentage of students scoring below expectation on TAKS than did those who did not attempt a math SLO (12% vs. 27%, respectively; $F = 3.57$, $p < .05$), a finding influenced by elementary teachers, who could have chosen not to attempt a math SLO (Figure 7 on the following page; see Appendix C for statistical summary). This suggests that establishing and meeting a math SLO generally resulted in higher student achievement on TAKS than not establishing a math SLO at all.

Teachers who established reading SLOs (whether they met them or not) had a significantly greater percentage of students exceeding expectations on reading TAKS than those who did not set SLOs in reading (25% vs. 15%, respectively; $F = 4.92$, $p = .01$). These

findings, influenced by elementary teachers who could have chosen not to attempt reading SLOs, suggest that although 2008 TAKS reading scale scores were higher for teachers who did not establish reading SLOs than for those who did, establishing a reading SLO may have resulted in greater student *growth* from 2007 to 2008 than not establishing a reading SLO at all.

Figure 7. Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations and SLOs Met in Math and Reading

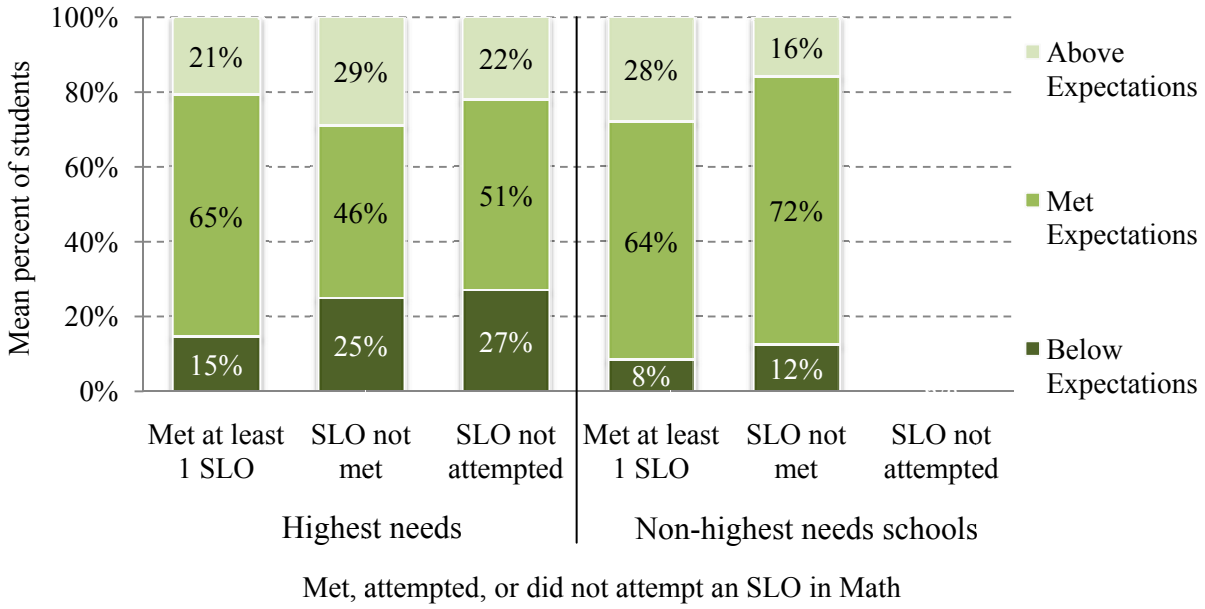


Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

Because REACH program elements are different for highest needs and non-highest needs schools, data also were examined separately to explore any differences in the way SLOs may relate to TAKS for these two groups of schools. At non-highest needs schools, teachers who met math SLOs had significantly more students exceeding 2008 TAKS expectations than did those who did not meet their math SLOs ($F = 7.04$, $p < .05$) (Figure 8 on the following page; see Appendix D for statistical summary). Additionally, at non-highest needs schools, teachers who attempted reading SLOs had significantly more students exceeding 2008 TAKS expectations than did those who did not attempt reading SLOs (whether they met them or not) ($F = 6.42$, $p < .01$) (Figure 9 on the following page; see Appendix D for statistical summary).

At highest needs schools, teachers who attempted reading SLOs (whether they met them or not) had significantly fewer students performing below expectations on TAKS reading in 2008 than those who did not attempt reading SLOs ($F = 8.67$, $p < .01$). Thus, SLOs may be of most value at highest needs schools to students with historically lower performance, and to those at non-highest needs schools with historically higher performance.

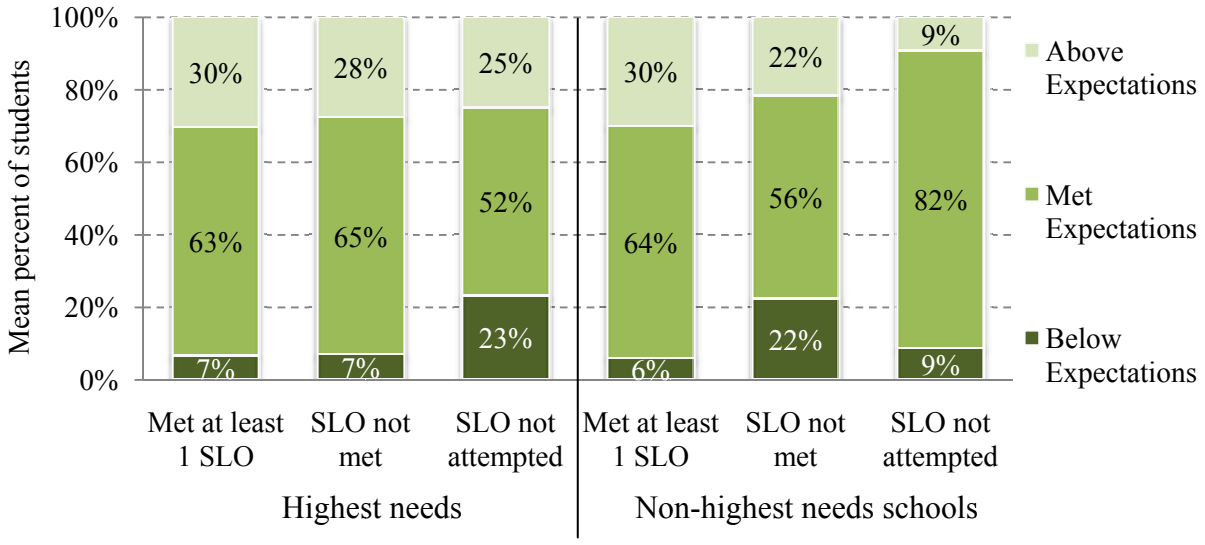
Figure 8. Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations in Math by Campus Need Status



Met, attempted, or did not attempt an SLO in Math

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

Figure 9. Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations in Reading by Campus Need Status

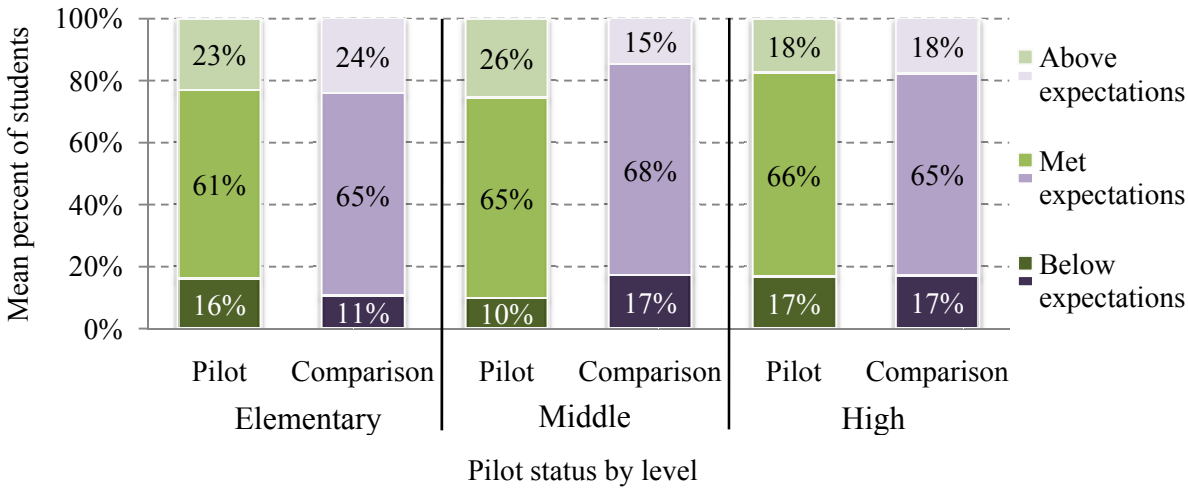


Met, attempted, or did not attempt an SLO in Reading

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

An examination of student performance for pilot and comparison teachers suggests that pilot middle school math teachers had a significantly greater percentage of students scoring above expectations on math TAKS than middle school comparison math teachers ($F = 6.04$, $p < .01$) (Figure 10; see Appendix E for statistical summary). There were no differences between pilot and comparison math teachers for other levels or between pilot and comparison teachers for reading TAKS.

Figure 10. Pilot and Comparison Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations in Math



Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

SLO training. A small but positive association was found between attending more training sessions and meeting SLOs (Table 9). Twenty-three percent of teachers who did not attend training sessions met no SLOs, compared with only 17% of teachers who attended at least one training session. Likewise, 65% of teachers who attended at least one training session met both SLOs, compared with 57% of teachers who did not attend a training session.

Table 9. SLOs Met by Training Sessions Attended

	Training sessions attended			
SLOs met	**None**	**1**	**2**	**3 or more**
0	18%	39%	42%	1%
1	15%	41%	35%	10%
2	12%	30%	47%	11%

Source. Core team SLO training records
Note. The association between training and SLOs met is significant ($\varphi = .17$, $p < .05$).

SLO quality. All SLOs were judged by two independent raters for overall quality (based on a rubric that included a measure of rigor). SLO approval required an overall average rating of 3.0 or higher (on a 4.0 scale), with at least a 3.0 rating specific to rigor. Thus, all completed SLOs were within the program definition of "rigorous." However, some variation

occurred among teachers in rigor and overall SLO quality. Table 10 displays the mean rigor and quality ratings for teachers who met 0, 1, or 2 SLOs, along with the results of analyses of variance (ANOVA) that tested whether the differences among means were meaningful. Although neither test met the criterion for statistical significance, both tests approached significance (in the range of $p < .10$), and data indicated that teachers with lower rigor and quality ratings were somewhat less likely to meet their SLOs than were those with higher rigor and quality ratings. Additionally, teachers with the highest ratings were somewhat more likely to meet both SLOs than teachers with lower ratings. This suggests teachers who set their goals high and according to the SLO guidelines for quality had students who were more likely to attain the growth target than were the students of teachers who set less challenging and/or lower quality goals.

Table 10. ANOVA for SLO Rigor and SLO Quality Ratings, by Number of SLOs Met

Indicator	SLOs met	Mean	*SD*	*F*	*p*
SLO rigor	**0**	7.12	0.85	2.11	n.s.
	1	7.23	0.78		
	2	7.31	0.68		
SLO quality	**0**	43.27	4.40	2.40	n.s.
	1	43.99	4.07		
	2	44.39	3.87		

Source. SLO database
Note. The maximum rigor mean is 8.0; the maximum quality score is 48.0.

SLO rigor and quality varied by subject area. Math SLOs received the highest rigor and quality ratings, followed by reading, other core areas (i.e., writing, science, social studies), and non-core areas. Reading and math SLOs were deemed both more rigorous and of higher quality than were SLOs for other subject areas (Table 11).

Table 11. SLO Quality, by Subject

Indicator	Subject	Mean	*SD*	*F*	*p*
SLO rigor	**Reading**	$3.65_{b,c,d}$	.34	12.81	<.01
	Math	$3.73_{a,c,d}$	.32		
	Other core area	$3.56_{a,b}$	.49		
	Other area	$3.51_{a,b}$	.40		
SLO quality	**Reading**	$22.21_{b,c,d}$	1.97	18.31	<.01
	Math	$22.69_{a,c,d}$	1.44		
	Other core area	$21.75_{a,b,d}$	2.64		
	Other area	$21.12_{a,b,c}$	3.35		

Source. SLO database
Note. Subscript indicates which means are significantly different from one another.

Summary of Results for SLOs

The majority of teachers (83%) met at least one of their SLOs. Establishing a reading SLO may have resulted in greater student growth from 2007 to 2008 than not establishing a reading SLO at all, and establishing and meeting a math SLO also appears to have resulted in greater student growth. Data suggest that SLOs may be of most value at highest needs schools to students with historically lower performance, and of most value at non-highest needs schools to those with historically higher performance.

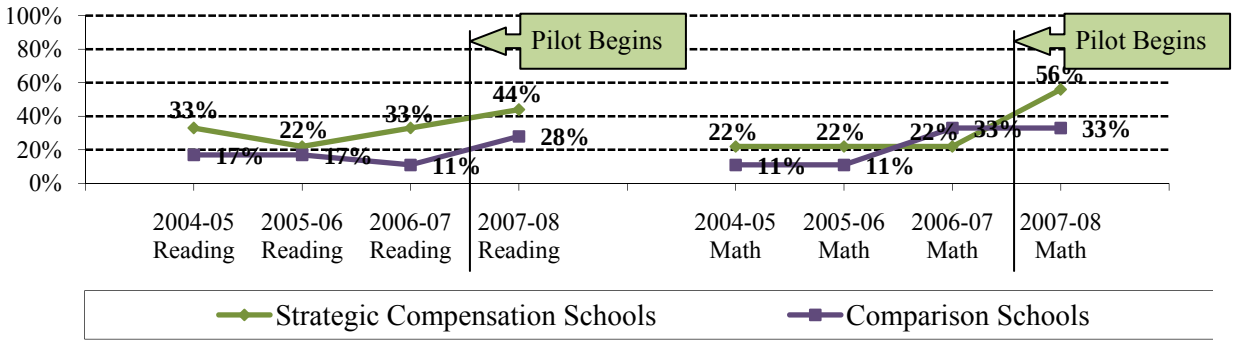
Teachers who set their goals high and according to the SLO guidelines for quality had students who were more likely to attain the growth target than were the students of teachers who set less challenging and/or lower quality goals. Reading and math SLOs were deemed both more rigorous and of higher quality than were SLOs for other subject areas. Additionally, a small but positive association was found between attending more training sessions and meeting SLOs.

Pilot middle school math teachers had a significantly greater percentage of students scoring above expectations on math TAKS than middle school comparison math teachers, but there were no differences between pilot and comparison math teachers for other levels or between pilot and comparison teachers for reading TAKS.

Results for Schoolwide Growth

TEA's Comparable Improvement indicator is a quartile ranking of schools within a selected group of 40 similar peer schools statewide. Every campus in the state is ranked into one of four growth categories (quartiles), based on the relative growth of its students on TAKS compared with rankings for the peer group of schools. Pilot schools were 2.5 times more likely to have achieved the top quartile in math for performance in the pilot year (n = 5) than in each of the three years prior (n = 2) (Figure 11 on the following page). Two pilot schools, Menchaca (math) and Hart (reading), achieved the top quartile for performance in 2007–2008 for the first time during the 4-year period. In 2007–2008, three pilot schools achieved the top quartile of growth in both reading and math TAKS. Two additional pilot schools made the top quartile of growth in math only and a third school made the top quartile in reading only. See Appendix F for campus quartile rankings for pilot and comparison schools.

Figure 11. AISD REACH Pilot and Comparison Schools Achieving the Top Quartile of TEA's Comparable Growth, 2004–2005 Through 2007–2008



Source. TEA accountability ratings

In 2007–2008, the percentage of both pilot and comparison schools achieving the top quartile of growth in reading increased over the prior year. However, pilot schools outpaced their comparison schools in math, for which 56% of pilot schools and 33% of comparison schools (i.e., a difference of 23 percentage points) achieved the top quartile of growth in 2007–2008.

As shown in Table 12, in reading, the majority of pilot schools (56%) did not change quartile categories from the prior year. Two schools improved (Hart and Menchaca) and two schools declined (Sims and Sunset Valley) by one or more quartile category in reading. Pilot schools were about as likely either to have improved by one or more quartile rankings or maintained top quartile status from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 in reading as were comparison schools, and were no more likely to have declined. Year-to-year comparable growth in reading was similar for pilot and comparison schools. In math, pilot schools were more likely to have improved by at least one quartile ranking from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 than were their comparison schools, and also were less likely to have declined.

Table 12. Change in Quartile Ranking From 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 Strategic Compensation Pilot Schools and Their Two Respective Comparison Schools

	Reading				Math			
	Pilot		Comparison		Pilot		Comparison	
Compared with 2006–2007	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Improved or maintained Q1	5	55%	9	50%	7	78%	11	61%
No change	2	22%	5	28%	1	11%	3	17%
Declined	2	22%	4	22%	1	11%	4	22%

Source. TEA accountability ratings

The school Need Index, however, was significantly related to both quartile ranking and actual ranking within a school's cohort of 41 schools for math; for this reason, additional analyses controlled for campus need when examining the effect of pilot status on quartile ranking and actual ranking within cohort. The Need Index reflects the sum of the percentage of

students with economic disadvantage, the percentage of students participating in special education, and half the percentage of students with limited English proficiency.

Arguably the most meaningful indicator of the pilot program's effect on school-wide growth is whether pilot participation influenced changes in a school's actual ranking within its cohort from the prior year, and pilot schools should improve at a greater rate than their comparison schools. Indeed, results show that pilot schools overall were 20% more likely to improve their ranking in math than were their research comparison schools (Table 13). The effect was strongest for non-highest needs pilot schools, which were 28% more likely than their research comparison schools to improve from the prior year, and improved by 8.6 places on average within the cohort of 41 schools. The results were not significant, probably due to small sample sizes. However, the strength of regression coefficients suggested promising pilot effects for improvement in status within math cohort. Effects were minimal and in the negative direction for reading. Thus, the pilot appeared to have had little effect on ranking within reading cohort, but results were promising for the program's effect on ranking within math cohort.

Table 13. Change From 2006–2007 to 2007–2008 in Ranking Within Comparable Improvement Cohort for Reading and Math

	All schools		Non-highest needs		Highest needs	
	Reading	**Math**	**Reading**	**Math**	**Reading**	**Math**
Average change in ranking within comparable improvement cohort of 41	-0.99 places	+5.51 places	-1.13 places	+8.63 places	-0.90 places	+3.1 places
Added likelihood of improvement based on pilot Participation	-3.4%	+20.3%	-3.5%	+28.3%	-3.3%	+13.0%

Source. TEA Comparable Improvement reports, 2006–2007 and 2007–2008
Note. The school Need Index was significantly related to both quartile ranking and actual ranking within a school's cohort of 41 schools for math; for this reason, analyses controlled for campus need when examining the effect of pilot status. The Need Index reflects the sum of the percentage of students with economic disadvantage, the percentage of students participating in special education, and half the percentage of students with limited English proficiency.

It is important to note that teachers at highest needs pilot schools had not yet received recruitment or retention stipends at the time of TAKS in Spring 2008. Thus, these data serve as baseline data for the effects of the pilot program on highest needs campuses without the implementation of those additional program elements. Follow-up analyses will examine whether the pilot program at highest needs schools attains the same effect as that for their non-highest needs pilot peers after recruitment and retention program elements have been implemented.

Summary of Results for Schoolwide Growth

All teachers and principals at six of the nine pilot schools received stipends for achieving the top quartile in one or more subjects. The pilot appeared to have had little effect on ranking within reading cohort, but results were promising for the program's effect on ranking within math cohort. Pilot schools overall were 20% more likely to improve their ranking in math than were their research comparison schools. The effect was strongest for non-highest needs pilot schools, which were 28% more likely than their research comparison schools to improve from the prior year.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Results for Novice Teacher Mentoring

Mentor perceptions. In March 2008, REACH mentors were asked to complete an online survey inquiring about their experiences as mentors and their perceptions of the program. Although 10 mentors participated in the survey, the responses from 1 mentor were excluded because the mentor misunderstood the scale of responses and provided inconsistent data. Therefore, we report here the responses from 9 mentors.

Overall, mentors rated their experiences as mentors favorably and positively. Most said they strongly agreed with items such as "The professional development I have received as a strategic compensation mentor has helped me to work better with new teachers" and "I am satisfied with my opportunity to 'make a difference' and to contribute to the overall success of my school this year." The only item many mentors disagreed with was "I have enough time to adequately meet the need of my mentees."

When asked to describe the biggest challenges they experienced as a mentor for the program, most reported lack of time to address the needs of all their mentees. One mentor said, "Since being a mentor, one of my biggest challenges has been finding and balancing my time among my mentees… Using extended time I can see all of my mentees daily." Another mentor reported,

> The need for mentoring is great for novice teachers and I do not feel that I have met all the need of the one beginning teacher I have been assigned. I feel that a full-time mentor can and has the time to work with the mentees.

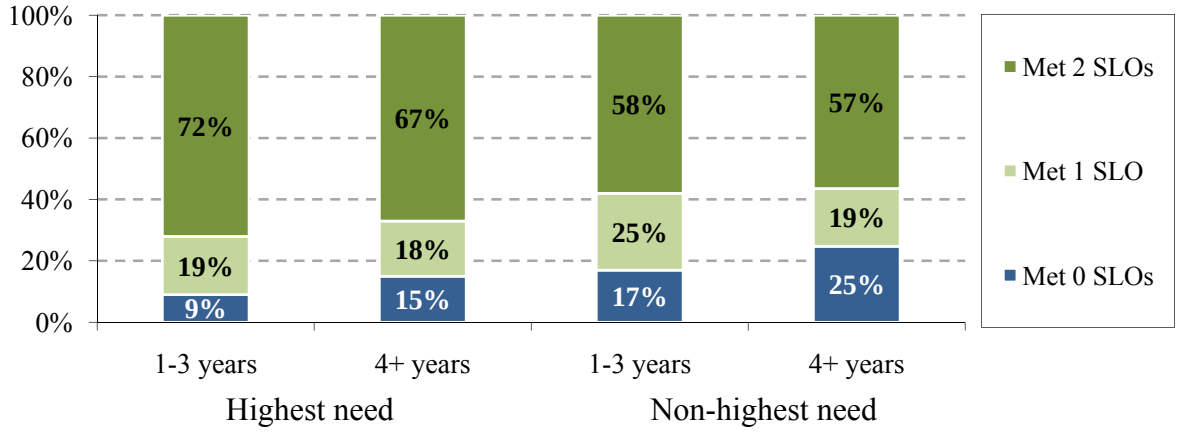
Mentors also described their successes as mentors. One mentor said,

> I think that my greatest success has been the confidence and comfort level that my mentees have in me. I feel successful when they come to me with questions, ask for ideas/materials, and just grab me when I am in the hallway and say, "I want you to see this!" I have also witnessed A LOT of growth in many of my mentees!

When asked for suggestions on how to improve the program, mentors suggested eliminating the combination teacher/coach/ mentor arrangement and changing the online documentation process.

SLOs for novice teachers. Teachers in their first 3 years of teaching were no less likely to meet their SLOs than were more experienced teachers (Figure 12). In fact, in highest needs schools, a greater percentage of novice teachers than of more experienced teachers met both SLOs. In both highest and non-highest needs schools, a lower percentage of novice teachers than of more experienced teachers failed to meet an SLO. Although these differences were not statistically significant, they suggest mentoring and SLO training for novice teachers may have enabled them to perform as well as their more experienced peers.

Figure 12. SLOs Met for Novice and More Experienced Teachers at Highest and Non-highest Needs Schools



Source. SLO database and AISD human resources data

Summary of Results for Novice Teacher Mentoring

Overall, mentors rated their experiences as mentors favorably and positively, but suggested eliminating the combination teacher/coach/ mentor arrangement and changing the online documentation process. Novice teachers were no less likely to meet their SLOs than were more experiences teachers, suggesting that mentoring and SLO training for novice teachers may have enabled them to perform as well as their more experienced peers.

Results for *Take One!*®

AISD participants. During year 1, 46 teachers (about 10%) and 4 principals (44%) participated in the *Take One!*® program. Eight of the 9 pilot schools had at least 1 participant. In the end, 62% (n = 31; 30 teachers and 1 principal) submitted a final portfolio, while the others participated in most or all of the professional development sessions, including videotaping for several, but did not submit a portfolio. One participant deferred submitting the portfolio until a later date. Those who submitted portfolios received a stipend of $200.

Of the 31 participants who submitted a portfolio, 10 received scores high enough to apply toward National Board certification within 2 years, which also allowed them to receive an additional stipend of $200. A description of the *Take One!*® participants can be found in Table 14.

Table 14. Teachers Who Participated in *Take One!*® Compared With Other Pilot Teachers

	***Take One!*® participants**	**Other pilot teachers**
Years teaching experience	8.57 (9.13)*	11.9 (9.71)
Years on campus	4.67 (4.02)	5.12 (4.32)
Percentage retained in 2008–2009	87%	83%
Percentage who met at least 1 SLO	85%	84%

Source. AISD human resources and PEIMS

* *Note.* Mean difference for teaching experience is statistically different (t = 2.17; p < .05).

National program evaluation. In a recent national study of the impact of *Take One!*® in high need schools, Margolin, Coggshall, O'Brien, and Thompson (2008) found that nearly all teachers improved their practice as a result of participation in the *Take One!*® program . However, about 12% of respondents reported little to no improvement in their teaching practice, suggesting a national variation in how the program was implemented and in how teachers experienced it. Most teachers reported participation in *Take One!*® enhanced professional collaboration on their campuses, improved their understanding of the NBPTS standards, and allowed them to use those standards in their teaching practice, and about half said it increased their interest in pursuing National Board certification.

Perhaps more notable, school support had clear implications for the impact of *Take One!*® on teacher outcomes(Margolin, Coggshall, O'Brien, & Thompson,2008). For example, principal support emerged as a critical element in the effectiveness of implementation. Principals whom teachers rated as being more involved also were significantly more likely than other teachers to be in schools that had structural supports (e.g., scheduled professional development opportunity time and release time to work on the program). Teachers who reported not receiving enough help from their mentors were less likely than other teachers to

report they benefitted from the program, and those with greater technical support and access to equipment were more likely than other teachers to complete the program. Finally, as the number of participants in the school increased, teacher reported benefits increased.

AISD participant survey. The results of the national study were echoed somewhat in the experience of participants in REACH pilot schools. During Spring 2008, participants of the *Take One!*® program completed an online survey about their experiences and opinions of the program. Survey respondents were divided almost evenly in their ratings of the quality of the *Take One!*® program. Fifty-six percent indicated the program met or exceeded their expectations and 44% said it did not meet their expectations. Responses also were divided with respect to the item "*Take One!*® has helped me with the process of setting and working toward my Student Learning Objectives." Forty-eight percent strongly agreed or agreed with this item and 48% said they disagreed or strongly disagreed. Although half of the survey participants indicated they disagreed *Take One!*® assisted them with their SLOs, 80% said they were glad they pursued the program, and 68% said they learned valuable teaching tools. However, only 40% reported plans to apply for National Board candidacy in the future.

Summary of Results for Take One!®

Nearly two-thirds of Take One!® participants submitted a final portfolio, and one third of those received scores high enough to apply towards National Board candidacy. However, only 40% of survey respondents reported plans to apply for National Board candidacy in the future.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

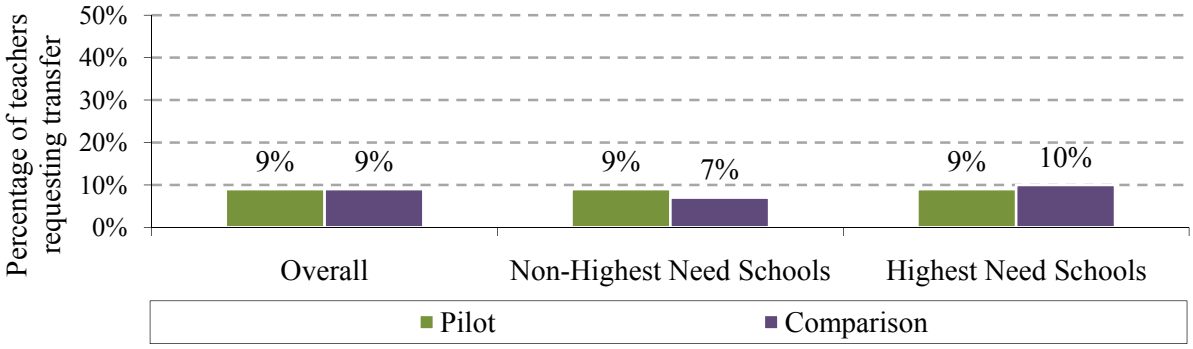
Results for Transfer Requests

Teachers who are contemplating a position or campus change can complete an AISD transfer request. Teachers can choose up to five campuses to which they would like to transfer, and principals have access to lists of transfer requests through the district data management system. Beginning in 2007–2008, transfer requests were logged into an electronic database. Transfer requests made by pilot teachers could be a proxy for intent to leave their campus in the future, and requests to transfer to pilot schools could reflect the recruitment value of the pilot; therefore, transfer requests were important to monitor over the course of the REACH pilot.

Figure 13 on the following page displays the percentage of teachers who requested transfers from REACH pilot campuses and their comparison schools during Spring 2008. Overall, only about 9% of teachers made a transfer request, and the numbers were nearly the same for teachers at highest needs pilot and comparison schools. The percentage of pilot

teachers who made transfer requests was similar to that of comparison teachers who did so, both at non-highest needs and highest needs schools. Interestingly, about one third of pilot teachers who made a transfer request desired a transfer to another REACH pilot campus.

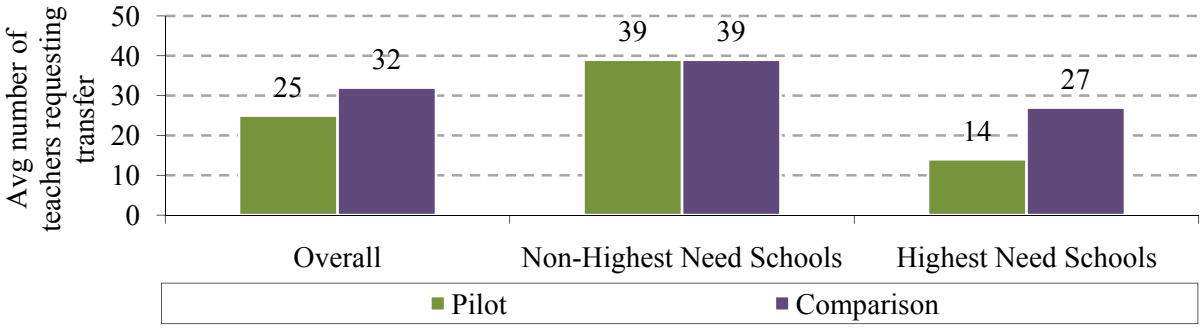
Figure 13. Eligible Teachers Requesting Transfers From a Pilot or Comparison Campus



Source. AISD human resources transfer request database

Figure 14 displays the average number of teachers who requested a transfer into a pilot campus. Fewer requests, on average, were made to transfer to REACH pilot schools than to comparison schools, but the discrepancy lay with the highest needs schools. Nearly twice as many teachers, on average, requested transfers into highest needs comparison schools than REACH pilot schools. At first glance, it may appear teachers were reluctant to transfer into pilot schools. However, as discussed earlier, data from the Employee Coordinated Survey suggest teachers generally were not well aware of the REACH pilot; thus, teachers probably were not avoiding REACH campuses deliberately. Transfer requests were more likely to have been influenced by the anticipated *Academically Unacceptable* state rating for one of the pilot's highest needs schools (Hart Elementary). Because only a single year of data is available at this time, it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions. Research in subsequent years should continue explore the effect pilot status may have on transfer patterns over time.

Figure 14. Teachers Requesting Transfers to Pilot or Comparison Campuses



Source. AISD human resources transfer request database

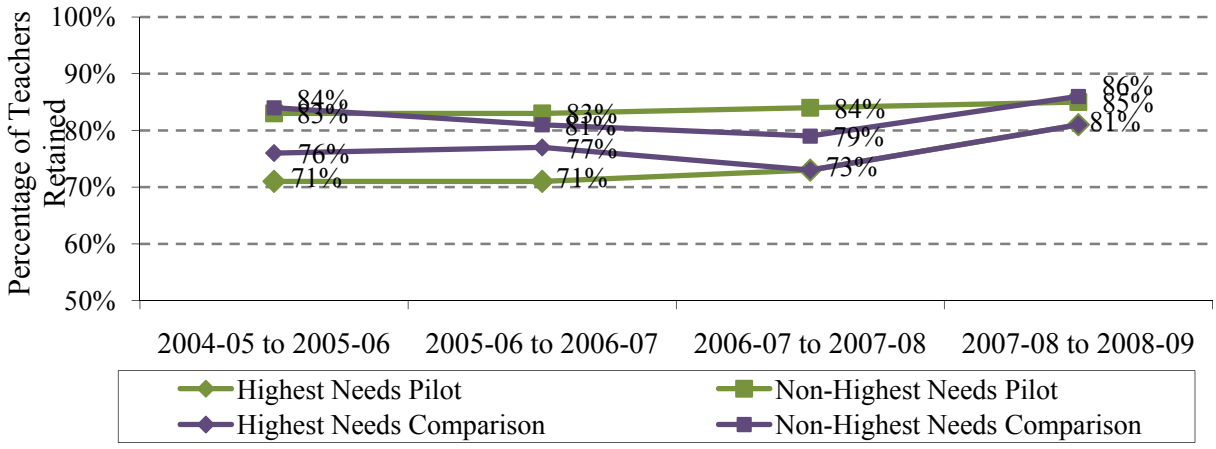
Results for Teacher Retention Rates

Teacher retention rates increased by 10% at highest needs pilot schools and by 1% at non-highest needs pilot schools from 2007–2008 to 2008–2009 (following year 1 of the pilot), representing a statistically significant improvement from one year to the next for highest needs schools only ($z = 2.35$, $p < .05$). However, teacher retention rates for comparison schools also improved during this period.

An examination of the relative 1-year amount of change for pilot and comparison schools indicates that, despite having their largest 1-year improvement in teacher retention rate over the past 4 years, highest needs pilot schools did not improve at a faster rate than did their comparison schools ($z = 0.04$, n.s.) for that 1-year period. Teacher retention for non-highest needs comparison schools increased by a greater amount from 2007–2008 to 2008–2009 than did the rates of their pilot school counterparts ($z = -4.33$, $p < .01$), reflecting a rebound from a dip in comparison schools' retention rates for the 2 prior years (Figure 15).

To remove the influence of this dip on the 1-year retention rate analyses, the relative amount of 4-year change was examined for pilot and comparison schools, using significance tests between groups on percentage change over the 4-year period. This analysis suggests no difference in the 4-year change in retention rates for non-highest needs pilot and comparison schools ($z = 0.19$, n.s.), but shows a significantly greater amount of change from 2005–2006 to 2008–2009 for highest needs pilot schools than for their comparisons ($z = 3.98$, $p < .01$).

Figure 15. Teacher Retention Rates From 2005–2006 Through 2008–2009 for REACH Pilot and Comparison Schools

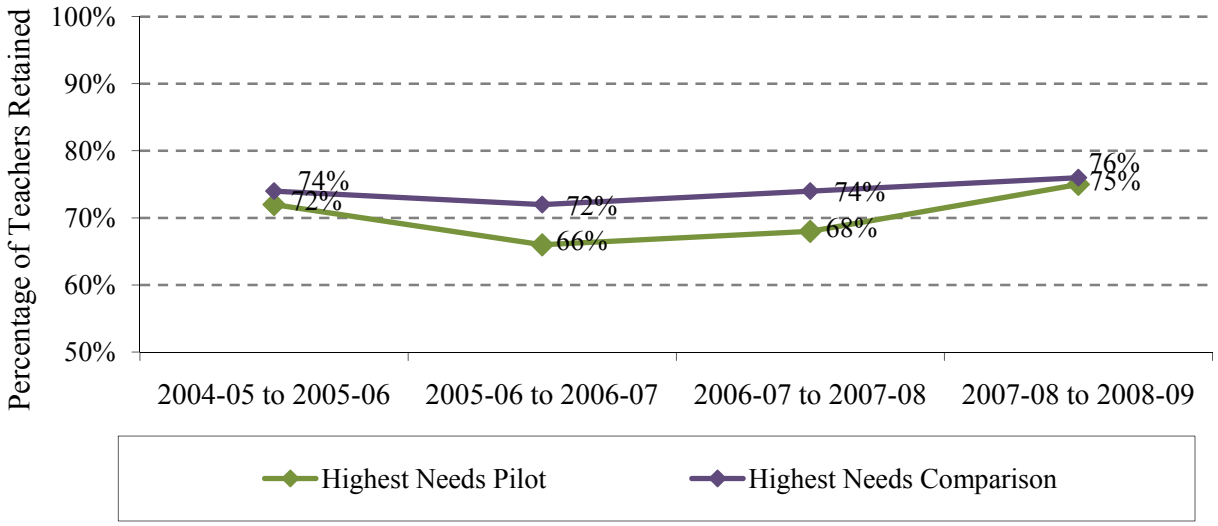


Source. AISD PEIMS 40 and 90 records, 2004–2005 through 2008–2009

An examination of retention rates for novice teachers at highest needs pilot and comparison schools reveals a significantly steeper one-year increase in retention rates for pilot schools than for comparisons ($z = 2.06$, $p < .05$). The retention rate for novice teachers increased by 11% from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 at highest needs pilot schools, compared with

a 3% increase for novice teacher retention rate at highest needs comparison schools (Figure 16). Data suggest that teacher retention rates at highest needs schools may benefit from the pilot, for all teachers and for novice teachers, in particular.

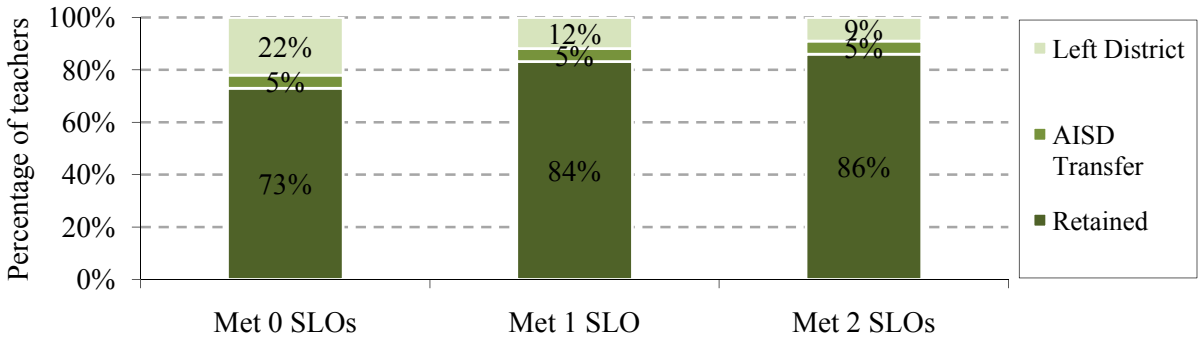
Figure 16. Novice Teacher Retention Rates From 2005–2006 Through 2008–2009 for Highest Needs Reach Pilot and Comparison Schools



Source. AISD PEIMS 40 and 90 records, 2004–2005 through 2008–2009

Retention and SLOs met. Most teachers who were retained met both of their SLOs, and teachers who transferred to another campus or left the district were less likely to have met both SLOs than teacher who remained at their campus (Figure 17). Approximately 27% of teachers who did not meet either SLO transferred to another AISD campus or left the district.

Figure 17. Pilot Teachers Retained, Transferring Within, or Leaving AISD, by SLOs Met



Source. 2008-2009 AISD human resources data and SLO database

Further examination of data suggests teachers who left their schools (either transferred or left the district) were different in other ways than were teachers who remained at their

schools. Results of *t*-tests indicate teachers who left had a lower percentage of students who performed above expectations and a higher percentage of students who performed below expectations on math TAKS than did teachers who were retained (Table 15). Leavers also met fewer SLOs than did stayers. This suggests, in part, that teachers with lower-performing students were less likely than other teachers to stay. Also, leavers reported weaker feelings of attachment to the teaching profession and to their campuses than did stayers, and had been on their campuses for a significantly shorter time (average of 3.83 years) than had stayers (average of 5.39 years).

Table 15. Comparison of Pilot Teachers Who Were Retained and Who Left Their Campus

	2008–2009 status	N	Mean	Std. Dev	*t*	*p*
% of students above expectations on math TAKS	Retained	47	0.28	0.14	1.99	<.05
	Left	16	0.20	0.15		
% of students below expectations on math TAKS	Retained	45	0.09	0.09	-2.15	<.05
	Left	16	0.15	0.12		
% of students below expectations on reading TAKS	Retained	48	0.12	0.12	-.08	n.s.
	Left	11	0.12	0.10		
% of students above expectations on reading TAKS	Retained	48	0.24	0.20	.11	n.s.
	Left	11	0.24	0.17		
Number of SLOs met	Retained	379	1.53	0.73	2.57	<.01
	Left	75	1.28	0.86		
Attachment to profession	Retained	145	3.55	0.71	2.55	<.01
	Left	30	3.19	0.67		
Attachment to school	Retained	145	3.30	0.75	4.22	<.01
	Left	30	2.61	1.11		
Average years on campus 1990 to 2007	Retained	380	5.39	4.47	2.93	<.01
	Left	78	3.83	3.16		
Satisfaction with salary and benefits	Retained	145	2.58	0.81	.79	n.s.
	Left	30	2.45	0.88		
Satisfaction with work environment	Retained	145	3.08	0.67	-.65	n.s.
	Left	30	3.18	1.03		
Satisfaction with work assignment	Retained	144	3.66	1.10	.07	n.s.
	Left	28	3.64	1.14		
Satisfaction with classroom resources	Retained	143	2.73	0.97	-.38	n.s.
	Left	30	2.80	0.93		

Source. AISD human resources database, AISD TAKS records, AISD PEIMS submission, AISD SLO database, 2007–2008 Employee Coordinated Survey

Summary of Results for Recruitment and Retention

A trend toward improvement in retention rates was noted at highest needs pilot campuses, particularly for novice teachers. Evidence also suggested the pilot did not dissuade teachers from moving to pilot schools; that is, the same number of teachers, on average, requested transfers into non-highest needs schools pilot and comparison schools. Many of those requesting a transfer out of their pilot schools requested to transfer into another pilot school.

STIPEND AWARDS

Overall, $2,211,500 was paid to teachers for participation in the REACH program (Table 16). The largest proportion of the total amount of stipends paid to teachers was for Schoolwide Growth in math and reading ($948,000). The second largest percentage was paid for achieving SLOs ($918,000), followed by stipends for teacher retention ($309,500) and recruitment ($28,000) at highest needs schools. Although the retention and recruitment stipends technically were not paid for activities that occurred in year 1, they have been included here due to the potential influence they may have had on the critical decisions teachers made prior to the start of year 2.

Table 16. Total Stipends Earned by Teachers Overall and by School Need Status

	Overall	Highest Needs	Non-Highest Needs
Schoolwide Growth	$948,000 (n = 328)	$665,000	$283,000
SLOs	$918,000 (n = 376)	$699,000	$219,000
Retention	$309,500 (n = 314)	$309,500	n/a
New to School (recruitment)	$28,000 (n = 124)	$28,000	n/a
Take One! ®	$8,000 (n = 30)	$3,400	$4,600
Total	$2,211,500	$1,704,900	$506,600

Source. REACH stipend payment lists

When excluding the recruitment stipends for 56 staff who were new to the nine pilot schools in Fall 2008 and the retention stipends for 23 staff who were not eligible for the pilot in 2007-2008, the 467 original pilot teachers from 2007-2008 earned a total of $2,149,000 ($4,602 per teacher, on average). Stipend awards ranged from $0 to $8,700 at highest needs schools ($5,420 per teacher, on average) and from $0 to $6,400 at non-highest needs schools ($3,089 per teacher, on average).

A total of $74,200 also was paid to principals of REACH pilot schools for Schoolwide Growth, SLOs, recruitment and retention, and *TakeOne!* ® participation. On average, principals earned $8,244 in REACH -related stipends. Principals at highest needs schools received $4,500 for facilitating the SLO process, and principals at non-highest needs schools

received $3,000. Principals at both highest and non-highest needs schools could receive $4,000 each for improvement in reading and math TAKS; thus, the total amount that any principal could have received for Schoolwide Growth was $8,000 if his or her school's TAKS scores improved in both reading and math. As with teachers, half the stipend for Schoolwide Growth was awarded for the year in which it was earned, while the other half was awarded for returning in Fall 2008. Two principals received the full $8,000, four principals received $4,000. Additionally, principals from the five highest needs schools were eligible for recruitment and retention awards. Three of the 5 principals remained in their positions and received a $1,500 for retention. New principals were recruited for the remaining two schools and these principals received $1,500 as a recruitment stipend.

PROGRAM CHANGES FOR 2008–2009

Based on a combination of experiences and formative feedback throughout the school year, several changes were made to the pilot for the 2008–2009 school year. Perhaps most notable is the expanded eligibility for participation, which was altered to include assistant principals, instructional coaches and specialists, and librarians. Significant changes also were made to the SLO program, core team composition, and Professional Growth program elements.

SLO guidelines were modified to allow for the creation of multi-tiered targets to better accommodate a class of students with a broad range of pre-assessment scores and to be more applicable to special education teachers with students of different cognitive ability levels. SLO documentation procedures also were streamlined and simplified through the use of a newly developed online SLO database that allows teachers to submit SLOs online for electronic approval by principals and the SLO team. The database also includes the ability for teachers to upload their student assessments and grade files to alleviate the need for hard copy storage of all materials necessary for final audits. The final substantial change to the SLO program for year 2 is the addition of a new formative assessment that must be used by core area teachers in grades 3 through 12 for at least one of their SLOs. The assessment and its corresponding data analysis and reporting tool were implemented at the start of the 2008–2009 school year.

Additional core team staff members were hired, including a communications specialist to coordinate communications activities aimed at both external and internal stakeholders, plus an additional SLO team member. Also, the former half-time position to support both the *Take One!*® and mentoring programs was increased to a full-time position. These new positions were deemed necessary to support the pilot program both in its first phase and also as the pilot expands to include more schools in subsequent years. The unanticipated D.A.T.E. grant allowed the pilot to include two more schools earlier than expected, Jordan Elementary and Webb Middle School, beginning in 2008–2009. The core team also expanded to include a

position, director of administrative programs, which is intended to develop additional supports and program elements geared toward participating pilot school administrators.

The Professional Growth program elements changed significantly between year 1 and year 2. Not only did they receive additional staff support, as mentioned previously, they also received new grant funding through the Beginning Teacher Induction grant, which involved a partnership with the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz. The partnership includes substantial training for program mentors, mentee teachers, and principals. In addition, the program converted from one in which mentors were hired and supervised by campus principals to one in which mentors are hired and supervised centrally as part of a district team of mentors, with mentor placement on campuses according to appropriate match and novice teacher need. The mentor evaluation tool, the MICAT, also was improved for use in year 2, as was the online mentor activity tracking tool. The *Take One!*® program also changed to require less time of participants.

Finally, steering committee membership was expanded to include additional teachers, and committee rules were clarified regarding the discussion and finalization of decisions.

SUMMARY

The first year of the AISD REACH pilot program was marked with many challenges, but overall the program demonstrated potential to influence teacher quality and retention, as well as student achievement. In particular, some evidence suggests the actions associated with setting and meeting SLOs were associated with student TAKS growth. Additionally, with the assistance of a REACH mentor, novice teachers were able to meet their SLOs at rates similar to those of their more experienced peers. With only one year of data, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the impact of the pilot on retention and recruitment, but a trend toward improvement in retention rates was noted at highest needs pilot campuses, particularly for novice teachers. Evidence also suggested the pilot did not dissuade teachers from moving to pilot schools; that is, the same number of teachers, on average, requested transfers into non-highest needs schools pilot and comparison schools and many of those requesting a transfer out of their pilot schools requested to transfer into another pilot school.

Throughout year 1, the REACH core team and SCI steering committee continuously worked to ensure that pilot teachers' and principals' needs were met and that their concerns and questions were addressed. This responsiveness could not have been possible, however, without the substantial input provided by program participants as the year progressed (Malerba, Bush-Richards, and Schmitt, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2008). Many of the changes planned for year 2 (e.g., expanded eligibility, rules about student mobility, and multi-tiered

SLO targets) arose as a result of critical feedback provided to the steering committee by teachers, principals, and REACH staff.

Despite these encouraging findings from year 1 and the programmatic changes that already have been planned and implemented for year 2, several key challenges remain. First, internal communication about the initiative, both for participants and those not in the pilot, must be enhanced if district staff are to understand and support the initiative. This communication includes both general information about the pilot program for the benefit of all district staff and more detailed information about specific timelines, expectations, and requirements for participants. Additionally, priority should be placed on building campus capacity to support the work of SLOs as the pilot continues to expand. SLO program staff should assist campus staff in the development of a coherent professional development opportunity and SLO support plan that efficiently uses resources from campuses and central offices. Finally, the *Take One!*® stipend should be increased to reflect the level of effort and professional devotion required. The following section describes more specific recommendations for these and other program improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Continue to increase the frequency and improve the quality of communication, particularly with teachers.** An effective rollout requires program participants to be extremely well informed about two factors in particular: the details of the program and the advantages of the new program over existing alternatives (Lewis & Seibold, 1998). And recent research examining teacher attitudes on pay for performance has suggested that lack of clear understanding of how such programs operate are widespread in districts using them (e.g., Clofelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2006; Jacobs & Springer, 2007). Goldhaber (2008) cautions that "[lack of understanding of the program] is likely to lessen the effectiveness of a reform, and open the door for misinformation (accidental or purposeful) that leads to political opposition. Consequently, investing in clear and direct lines of communication with teachers about specifics of any reform program will be crucial to its success." (p.19)

   One of the most pervasive concerns voiced by teachers was a lack of clear, consistent information about program requirements, rules, and timelines. In response to this, the SLO team made extensive revisions to their documentation prior to year 2, and teachers noted these improvements during focus groups in Fall 2008. However, teachers expressed a desire for more information directly from the core team and SLO staff (rather than through their principals) and a desire for updates and alerts via the web and email. Currently, many communications from the program staff to teachers are funneled through the campus principals. This is advantageous in some respects, particularly because it serves to keep principals well informed and it allows principals to customize messages and to provide relevant campus-specific information. However, relying on third-party transmission can result in a significant loss of timeliness and fidelity.

2. **Increase *internal* efforts to improve understanding of and to garner support for the initiative.** Again, the success of implementing a new program depends in part on the effectiveness of efforts to keep stakeholders well informed. In recognition of this, by the end of year 1, the core team included a communications specialist from the AISD Office of Planning and Community Relations to coordinate pilot communications. This resulted immediately in improved web content, increased interaction with the local media, and increased contact with community stakeholders. Additionally, an internal communications campaign was

launched to provide basic program information to all campus and central office staff district wide. However, survey results from the Spring 2008 Employee Coordinated Survey indicated the majority of AISD staff, both on campuses and in the central office, were unfamiliar with the REACH pilot. Additional efforts directed at AISD staff are critical, especially if the pilot continues to expand as planned. Generating early interest in the program will benefit the pilot when new schools are invited to participate. In addition, the AISD community has the potential to influence the future of strategic compensation. Their opinions of the merit and viability of this program will become part of the public dialogue leading to a vote to determine whether to fund this program through additional tax increases in the future.

3. **Build capacity *on campuses* for supporting staff**. The success of this initiative may depend on the extent to which the core team is successful in training staff and facilitating the REACH program on campuses. Feedback from campus staff obtained through focus groups and surveys suggests these efforts largely were successful during year 1. The challenge for year 2 and beyond is to maintain a high level of service, while building capacity on pilot campuses to facilitate some of the key processes with less intensive support from the core team.

4. **Campus principals, with assistance from the SLO team, should plan and execute their own SLO action plans.** Rhodes and Beneicke (2002) suggested that management teams must carefully identify teacher learning needs for coaching, mentoring, and other similar teacher development processes to raise standards and achievement within their schools. To this end, with the help of the SLO team, campus principals should develop and execute a campus SLO action plan that includes timelines, procedures, responsible parties, and required resources. Through the development and implementation of these campus action plans, principals and the SLO team could identify and support activities and professional development opportunities required at the individual teacher level, at the campus-specific level, and pilot wide.

5. **SLO training should be mandatory for all pilot participants.** Results indicated teachers who participated in training were more likely to meet SLOs than teachers who did not. Although participation in training was not mandatory for year 1, all pilot participants should attend every formal training opportunity concerning SLOs.

6. **Provide opportunities for core team professional growth and development.** To facilitate the development of this program, particularly with respect to supporting campuses over the long term, opportunities for professional growth and development should be made available to the core team. This would serve multiple aims, including the ability of the core team to model the behavior the program itself incentivizes: namely, support for professional growth. This also would allow the SLO team to meet the teacher needs identified through the SLO action plan. Additional opportunities to build community and to set group and individual goals for the coming year *within* the core team (e.g., the "Year 1 Offsite Meeting" that took place in Summer 2008) also would be beneficial.

7. **Modify both expectations for time requirements and compensation for *Take One!*® participants.** *Take One!*® generated a substantial amount of early interest, but the actual number of participants who made it to the final stage was significantly smaller than anticipated. Survey respondents who participated in the program indicated that although, in the end, the program provided them with high-quality professional development opportunities, the program did not meet their expectations for the time required. Survey comments and focus group feedback also indicate participants and non-participants agreed the stipends were too low for the time and effort required. In order to increase retention in and satisfaction with this program, potential participants should receive a detailed, realistic preview of the program from the outset, including a schedule of activities, tentative due dates, and estimates of time required in groups and on one's own. This way, participants would have a clearer picture from the very beginning of what they are expected to accomplish. The stipend for this program also should be increased to at least $1,000, divided in $500 increments (i.e., half for submission, half for a passing score). This higher dollar amount would not only increase the incentive to complete the program, but also would signal more effectively the value of the program itself.

CONCLUSION

The current evaluation suggests incentive pay may indeed influence teacher and student behaviors when implemented in tandem with additional training and support for teachers. Many merit pay systems of the past appear either to have operated under an assumption that teachers would perform "better" with only the incentive of additional money, or to have been primarily pay initiatives designed to reward those teachers who were doing a "good job." The AISD REACH pilot already holds more promise for teacher buy in and ultimately for program success because not only was it developed *with* teachers, but it was conceived by those who recognized the flawed assumptions of incentive pay programs that failed in the past.

Teachers do not enter the educational profession with an expectation for high compensation; thus, they already may be less predisposed than are some professionals to be motivated by money alone. Additionally, teachers typically do not use less effective strategies than they would implement "if only there were more incentive." In fact, today's teachers must operate under tremendous pressure for high student achievement, given the recent history of accountability sanctions and national attention to educational outcomes for students. Some could argue that incentives for good performance already exist.

However, the traditional salary schedule provides little incentive for professional growth that can lead to more effective teaching strategies and increased student performance. The REACH pilot design, in theory, not only provides incentives for teachers to elicit student results, but also includes the support structure necessary for the professional growth that must precede a change in practice. Although year 1 of the pilot was accompanied by significant challenges, the SLO process and Novice Teacher Mentoring program demonstrated the potential for influencing both student achievement and teacher retention. Additionally, as Rothstein (2008) described, monetary incentives for teachers may serve to reorient those who might otherwise become private sector employees rather than choose a career in teaching.

Although teachers in AISD continued to be skeptical about pay for student performance, attitudes were more favorable toward additional pay for more challenging work assignments than for other programs. Additionally, teacher retention data after year 1 of REACH stipends showed a potential for positive impact at highest needs schools. District recruitment and retention efforts, however, may be hindered by current district policy, which does not allow teacher transfers within the district until after the third year of service on a campus in the district. This policy may serve to nudge some teachers out of the district, rather than to a different campus within. Future studies should examine in more detail the characteristics of teachers who leave the district altogether.

In addition, broader economic conditions must be incorporated into any future examination of the effectiveness of REACH (or other similar programs). Education comprises the largest single portion of a state budget, and decreases in state revenue resulting from higher unemployment rates, lower consumer spending, declining asset values, and increased expenditures for aid programs (e.g., Medicaid and other social services) represent potential threats to education spending. The result is that districts around the country already are facing difficult financial choices. In fact, at least 27 states had to cut education budgets even prior to the current recession (Rieman, 2007).

Any resulting changes at the campus level (e.g., decreases in staff, increases in class size, suspended cost of living wage increases, increases in student mobility) are likely to have an impact on outcomes measured in the evaluation of programs such as REACH. Additionally, teacher retention tends to stabilize or increase when economic conditions make it more difficult for teachers to move out of the classroom and into other industries; thus, the true impact of REACH on retention may be difficult to disentangle. For this reason, fluctuations in teacher retention and student performance in subsequent years should be interpreted cautiously and in light of the economic conditions surrounding them.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Summary of Year 1 REACH Pilot Programs and Stipends

		Highest needs schools			Non-highest needs schools	
		Principals	**Teachers**	**Mentors**	**Principals**	**Teachers**
Student growth	**SLOs** Teachers develop 2 SLOs	$4,500	$1,500/ SLO achieved		$3,000	$1,000/ SLO achieved
	School-wide TAKS growth Rewards for achieving TEA's quartile 1 Comparable Improvement in reading & math	$4,000 reading $4,000 math	$2,000 reading $2,000 math		$4,000 reading $4,000 math	$2,000 reading $2,000 math
Recruiting and retention	**New to school stipend** Teachers in Years 1-3 of Service receive a stipend		$1,000 for years 1–3			
	Retention stipend Returning teachers and principals receive a stipend	$3,000 per year at the school	$3,000 for years 4–6			
Professional growth	**Novice teacher mentoring** Mentors work with cohort of teachers in years 1–3 of service		Teachers in years 1–3 receive a REACH mentor	$3,000 stipend for service $2,000 stipend for satisfactory evaluation		
	Take One! ® Candidates complete 1 of the 10 requirements for National Board certification	Candidates: $395 per teacher fee waived $200 stipend for submitting *"Take One"* entry to NBPTS $200 stipend for receiving a passing score from NBPTS				

Appendix B: Statistical Differences Among Staff Roles Within Campus and Central Office Employees

	Campus				Central office		
	Admin (n = 138)	Teacher (n = 2542)	Non-teaching profess (n = 368)	Class (n = 309)	Admin (n = 186)	Non-teaching profess (n = 84)	Class (n = 409)
How familiar are you with the district's Strategic Compensation Initiative pilot program?	2.81[a]	2.52[d]	2.45[a,d]	2.90[b,c]	2.63[f]	1.93[e,f]	2.56[f]
Strategic Compensation (i.e., some performance-based pay system) is a good idea.	2.93[b,c]	2.38[a,d]	2.33[a,d]	2.86[b,c]	2.84[f,g]	2.56[e,g]	3.04[e,f]
I would like to participate in the district's Strategic Compensation Initiative.	2.89[b,c]	2.30[a,d]	2.33[a]	2.60[b]	2.58	2.30	2.38

Source. 2007–2008 Employee Coordinated Survey

Note. For the familiarity item, the scale had a range of 1 = not at all familiar to 4 = very familiar. For the other two items, the scale had a range of 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. All items had an additional don't know/NA option. Superscript letters indicate statistically significant differences (ANOVA using Tukey HSD) among means, such that [a] indicates mean is significantly different from campus administrators, [b] indicates mean is significantly different from teachers, [c] indicates mean is significantly different from campus non-teaching professionals, [d] indicates that the mean is significantly different from campus classified staff, [e] indicates mean is significantly different from central administrators, [f] indicates mean is significantly different from central non-teaching professionals, and [g] indicates that the mean is significantly different from central classified staff.

Appendix C. Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations and SLOs Attempted in Math or Reading

		Mean % of teacher's students	*SD*	*F*	Sig.
Below expectations	**Met at least 1 math SLO [(a)]**	12.1%[c]	8.7%	3.57	<.05
	Math SLO not met [(b)]	17.4%	13.8%		
	Math SLO not attempted [(c)]	27.0%[a]	29.2%		
	Met at least 1 reading SLO	6.5%	6.4%	1.64	n.s.
	Reading SLO not met	12.3%	16.2%		
	Reading SLO not attempted	13.5%	12.7%		
Above expectations	**Met at least 1 math SLO**	23.5%	12.2%	.237	n.s.
	Math SLO not met	20.8%	14.5%		
	Math SLO not attempted	22.1%	20.7%		
	Met at least 1 reading SLO[(a)]	30.3%[c]	15.0%	4.92	.01
	Reading SLO not met [(b)]	25.6%[c]	15.7%		
	Reading SLO not attempted [(c)]	14.5%[ab]	13.6%		

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records
Note. Superscripts indicate which means are significantly different.

Appendix D. Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations in Math and Reading by Campus Need Status

		Mean % of teacher's students	*SD*	*F*	Sig.
Below expectations	**Math**				
	Highest needs				
	Met at least 1 math SLO	14.5%	8.7%	2.77	n.s.
	Math SLO not met	24.8%	9.4%		
	Math SLO not attempted	27.0%	29.2%		
	Non-highest needs				
	Met at least 1 math SLO	8.4%	7.5%	0.84	n.s.
	Math SLO not met	12.4%	14.4%		
	Math SLO not attempted	n/a	n/a		
	Reading				
	Highest needs				
	Met at least 1 reading SLO [(a)]	6.6%[c]	7.0%	8.67	<.01
	Reading SLO not met [(b)]	7.0%[c]	5.9%		
	Reading SLO not attempted [(c)]	23.2%[ab]	15.5%		
	Non-highest needs				
	Met at least 1 reading SLO	5.9%	3.5%	2.16	n.s.
	Reading SLO not met	22.3%	24.2%		
	Reading SLO not attempted	8.6%	8.2%		
Above expectations	**Math**				
	Highest needs				
	Met at least 1 math SLO	20.8%	11.6%	0.85	n.s.
	Math SLO not met	29.1%	18.1%		
	Math SLO not attempted	22.1%	20.6%		
	Non-highest needs				
	Met at least 1 math SLO [(a)]	27.9%[b]	12.1%	7.04	<.05
	Math SLO not met [(b)]	15.9%[a]	9.7%		
	Math SLO not attempted	n/a	n/a		
	Reading				
	Highest needs				
	Met at least 1 reading SLO	30.4%	16.1%	0.24	n.s.
	Reading SLO not met	27.6%	16.9%		
	Reading SLO not attempted	24.9%	17.9%		
	Non-highest needs				
	Met at least 1 reading SLO [(a)]	30.1%[c]	11.2%	6.42	<.01
	Reading SLO not met [(b)]	21.7%[c]	13.5%		
	Reading SLO not attempted [(c)]	9.3%[ab]	7.3%		

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

Note. Superscripts indicate which means are significantly different.

Appendix E. Pilot and Comparison Teachers' Students Above and Below TAKS Scale Score Expectations in Math

		Mean % of teacher's students	*SD*	*F*	Sig.
Below expectations	**Pilot elementary math**	16.0%	16.3%	3.79	n.s.
	Comparison elementary school math	10.5%	11.2%		
	Pilot middle school math	9.7%	7.7%	2.07	n.s.
	Comparison middle school math	17.2%	11.5%		
	Pilot high school math	16.6%	7.0%	0.02	n.s.
	Comparison high school math	17.1%	12.1%		
Above expectations	**Pilot elementary math**	23.2%	15.3%	0.06	n.s.
	Comparison elementary school math	24.2%	19.5%		
	Pilot middle school math	25.5%	11.8%	6.04	<.01
	Comparison middle school math	14.8%	9.3%		
	Pilot high school math	17.6%	7.4%	0.01	n.s.
	Comparison high school math	17.8%	8.1%		

Source. SLO database and district TAKS records

Note. Superscripts indicate which means are significantly different.

Appendix F. TEA Comparable Improvement Quartiles for REACH Pilot and Comparison Schools, 2004–2005 Through 2007–2008

	2004–2005		2005–2006		2006–2007		2007–2008	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Barton Hills	2	3	1	1	1	4	1	1
Gullett	3	4	4	4	2	3	4	1
Davis	4	2	1	4	4	4	2	3
Hart	3	3	2	2	3	4	1	3
Palm	3	2	3	2	1	3	2	2
Graham	3	2	3	4	2	2	1	1
Menchaca	3	4	2	4	3	3	2	1
Casey	3	4	4	4	2	1	2	1
Brentwood	1	2	3	2	4	3	1	1
Rodriguez	1	3	4	3	2	3	2	2
St. Elmo	2	4	3	4	4	1	2	1
Wooldridge	2	3	1	2	2	4	2	3
Sims	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	4
Williams	2	4	4	3	4	4	3	4
Ortega	4	4	4	3	4	2	4	3
Sunset Valley	4	3	3	3	3	4	4	4
Galindo	2	2	3	3	2	3	1	3
Joslin	2	2	3	3	1	1	3	3
Dobie	1	1	3	3	1	2	1	1
Bedichek	3	3	2	2	3	1	4	3
Burnet	2	2	3	3	3	4	1	2
O. Henry	2	4	3	2	3	1	3	1
Covington	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	3
Lamar	1	2	2	1	2	4	1	4
Lanier	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Akins	1	1	3	3	3	1	3	1
Travis	2	1	2	2	4	1	3	1

Source. TEA 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008 accountability data tables

AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Pascal D. Forgione, Jr., Ph.D.

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY
Anne Ware, Ph.D.

DEPARTMENT OF PROGRAM EVALUATION
Holly Williams, Ph.D.

AUTHORS
Lisa Schmitt, Ph.D.
Karen Cornetto, Ph.D.
Catherine Malerba, Ph.D.
Angelica Ware, Ph.D.
Angela Bush-Richards, Ph.D.
Amy Imes, Ph.D.

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