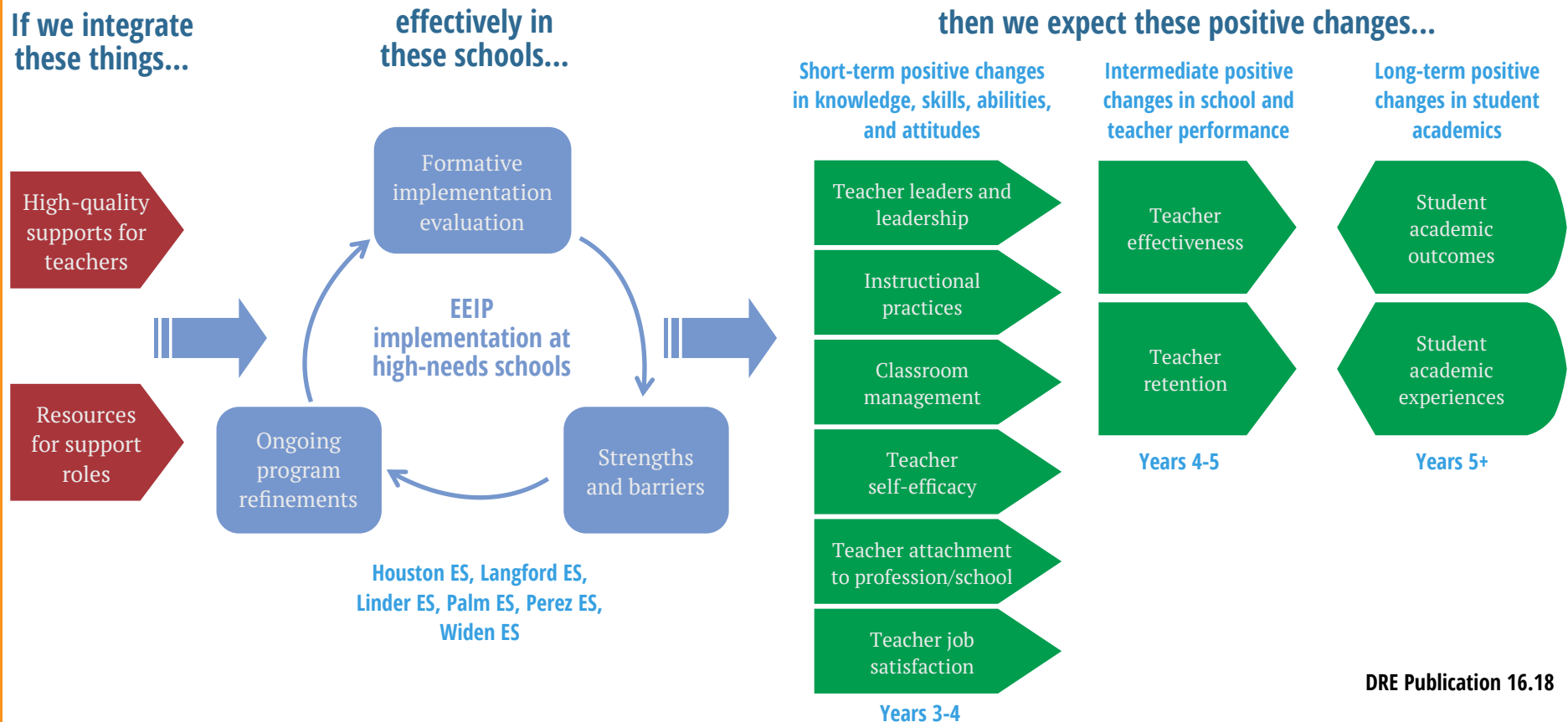# Summary of the Educator Excellence Innovation Program (EEIP) in Austin Independent School District in the Third Year of Implementation

Statement of the problem: Many new teachers leave after the first couple of years of teaching (especially at high-needs schools). Those who persist through their early years may be left in charge of their own development. Replacing teachers is expensive, but more importantly, students may be placed at an academic disadvantage during a novice teacher's learning years. Schools need a culture of high-quality, <u>school-based</u> supports and leadership opportunities for teachers to help induct, develop, and continuously grow as professionals throughout their careers.

EEIP in AISD provides: Full-release mentors (FRMs) for teachers in their first 2 years of teaching, one-to-one campus-based mentors (CBMs) for teachers in their 3rd year of teaching, peer observers (POs) to support the growth of teachers with 4 or more years of teaching experience, the Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) teacher appraisal system, student learning objectives (SLO) facilitators, professional learning communities (PLCs), and PLC leads.

Figure 1
Diagram of EEIP Theory of Change

If we integrate these things...
- High-quality supports for teachers
- Resources for support roles

effectively in these schools...
EEIP implementation at high-needs schools
- Formative implementation evaluation
- Strengths and barriers
- Ongoing program refinements

Houston ES, Langford ES, Linder ES, Palm ES, Perez ES, Widen ES

then we expect these positive changes...

Short-term positive changes in knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes
- Teacher leaders and leadership
- Instructional practices
- Classroom management
- Teacher self-efficacy
- Teacher attachment to profession/school
- Teacher job satisfaction

Years 3-4

Intermediate positive changes in school and teacher performance
- Teacher effectiveness
- Teacher retention

Years 4-5

Long-term positive changes in student academics
- Student academic outcomes
- Student academic experiences

Years 5+

DRE Publication 16.18

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Key Findings From the First Few Years

Findings from the first 2 years of evaluation revealed the following:

- EEIP participants perceived a positive impact from novice teachers' mentoring in year 2 and a successful integration of the FRM role on campuses.

- EEIP participants valued peer observation and perceived the work to have a positive impact on the instructional skills evaluated under PPfT. However, due to the voluntary nature of working with a PO, participation by experienced teachers was low.

- Participants had mixed perceptions of the 3rd year mentoring component of EEIP. Mentors and mentees had positive perceptions of the implementation, while principals felt the implementation had room for improvement.

- EEIP principals and teachers valued having the PLCs and reported positive impacts on instruction. Participants' feedback revealed that PLCs were struggling with time efficiency issues and made minimal use of PLC time for watching peers' teaching lessons and providing feedback.

- EEIP participants reported being well supported in their SLO work, but also reported they did not see much impact on students' achievement or on instructional practices. EEIP principals noted the potentially conflicting incentives for SLOs as a result of their inclusion in high-stakes appraisal.

Major program adjustments for the 2016–2017 school year based on the year 2 evaluation (i.e., 2015–2016) included:

- Adopting professional action research teams (PARTs) into PLCs to help better integrate PLCs into instruction and learning in the teachers' classrooms.

- Changing participation in peer observation from voluntary to at least one required peer observation for every experienced teacher on an EEIP campus.

- Encouraging teachers to build the work of their SLOs into the work of their PARTs.

The year 3 (2016–2017) evaluation of EEIP continues to monitor the mentoring implementation, with an additional focus on the implementation of the PARTs. The PART evaluation includes an examination of the 1st year of implementation and further investigates whether teachers were set up to succeed in the action research process (i.e., the basic competencies needed and whether teachers already possess them).

What is EEIP in AISD?

EEIP is a Texas Education Agency (TEA) grant program that funds innovation in teacher supports and leadership opportunities.

Austin Independent School District (AISD) was initially awarded a total of $2 million over a 2-year period of performance from 2014 through 2016. In 2016, AISD's renewal application was accepted for an additional 2 years of funding through the 2017–2018 school year.

EEIP in AISD has supported more than 230 teachers in each year of the program at six Title I elementary schools:

- Houston
- Langford
- Linder
- Palm
- Perez
- Widen

Resources funded through the grant include:

- Stipends for mentorship roles
- FRM and PO teaching salaries
- Stipends for teacher leadership roles
- Compensation for substitutes
- Professional development opportunities and training for all support roles
- Technology to facilitate observations and PLC work

Program Refinements

The most successful EEIP component was the FRMs, due to their dedicated in-class time with teachers and autonomy from campus leadership. Barriers to implementing high-quality, school-based supports for teachers included (a) the time for teachers to participate without reducing existing load; (b) limited substitute availability/reliability to cover classes; (c) the extent of administrator buy-in and advocacy; (d) time for campus-based mentorship, given the full teaching load; (e) organization of mentoring and leadership activities; and (f) integration of mentoring roles and processes into the school culture. Figure 2 shows the program refinements, in response to findings, over time.

Figure 2
EEIP Timeline Showing Program Components and Refinements Over the Course of the 4-Year Award Period
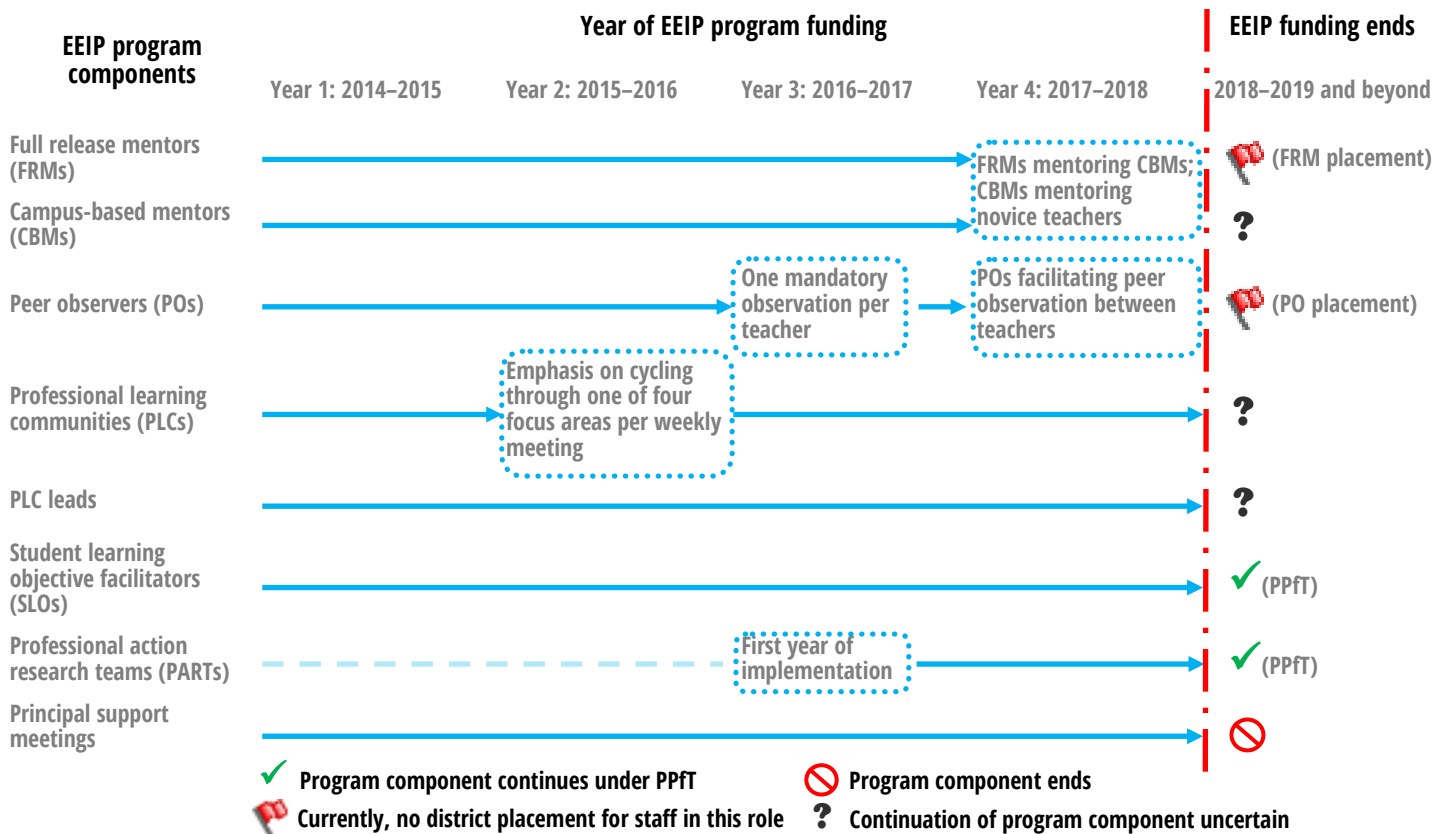
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