

Year 2 Evaluation of the Educator Excellence Innovation Program in Austin Independent School District





Executive Summary

The Educator Excellence Innovation Program (EEIP) is a Texas Education Agency (TEA) grant program that funds innovation in teacher support. 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.

In the 2015–2016 school year, 237 classroom teachers at six Title I elementary schools participated in EEIP (i.e., Houston, Langford, Linder, Palm, Perez, and Widen). The AISD EEIP implementation included novice teacher mentoring, peer observation, the Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) appraisal system, student learning objective (SLO) facilitators, and professional learning communities (PLCs) and PLC leads.

This year 2 evaluation report describes feedback from EEIP program participants collected during the 2015–2016 school year. Data collection for the year 2 evaluation of EEIP addressed all components of the EEIP implementation, but focused on better understanding participants' perceptions of PLCs, peer observation, and SLOs, given concerns about those three EEIP components uncovered in the 2014–2015 evaluation of EEIP (i.e., year 1). Findings revealed the following:

- EEIP principals and teachers valued having the PLCs and reported positive impacts on instruction. Participant feedback revealed that PLCs might be struggling with time efficiency issues and minimal use of PLC time for watching peers' teaching lessons and providing feedback.
- 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 peer observer, participation by experienced teachers was low.
- EEIP participants reported being well supported in their SLO work, but also reported they were not seeing 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.
- EEIP participants perceived positive impacts of novice teachers' mentoring in year 2 and a successful integration of the full-release mentor role on campuses.
- 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.

Major program adjustments for the 2016–2017 school year based on the year 2 evaluation (i.e., 2015–2016 school year) 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 requiring at least one 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.

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Introduction

Brief Description of the EEIP Implementation

The Educator Excellence Innovation Program (EEIP) is a Texas Education Agency (TEA) funded program designed “to improve educator effectiveness in Texas public schools through the funding of innovative practices that target the entire timeline of a teacher’s career.”¹ Six elementary schools are participating in EEIP in Austin Independent School District (AISD). EEIP in AISD includes:

- Full-release mentors (FRMs) for teachers in their first 2 years of teaching
- Campus-based mentors (CBMs) for teachers in their 3rd year of teaching
- Peer observers (POs) to support growth of teachers with 4 or more years of teaching experience
- The Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) teacher appraisal system²
- Student learning objectives (SLO) facilitators
- Professional learning communities (PLCs) and PLC leads

EEIP was originally funded as a 2-year award for the 2014–2015 and 2015–2016 school years. At the end of the original period of performance, awardees were given the opportunity to apply for a renewal to continue the EEIP implementation for 2 additional years. AISD’s renewal was awarded by TEA. EEIP will continue for a 3rd and 4th year in AISD during the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 school years.

Overview of the Year 2 Evaluation

The year 1 evaluation of EEIP in AISD focused on program-specific survey questions from three instruments: (a) the AISD Employee Coordinated Survey (ECS), (b) the Mentor Innovation Configuration Assessment Tool (MICAT), and (c) the Peer Observer Innovation Configuration Assessment Tool (PICAT). The year one EEIP evaluation analyses highlighted programmatic questions about the effectiveness of PLCs, underuse of POs by experienced teachers, and initial dissatisfaction with SLOs (Cornetto, 2015).

For the 2nd year evaluation of EEIP in AISD, evaluation activities examined all the main elements of the implementation, but primarily focused on the questions raised from the year 1 evaluation regarding PLCs, PO, and SLOs. Data collection for the year 2 program evaluation included midyear interviews with EEIP principals ($n = 5$), midyear focus groups with FRMs ($n = 7$) and POs ($n = 2$), and teacher survey items from the spring 2016 AISD ECS (the number of respondents varied by item and teacher group).

¹ http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/News_and_Multimedia/Correspondence/TAA_Letters/2014-2016_Educator_Excellence_Innovation_Program/

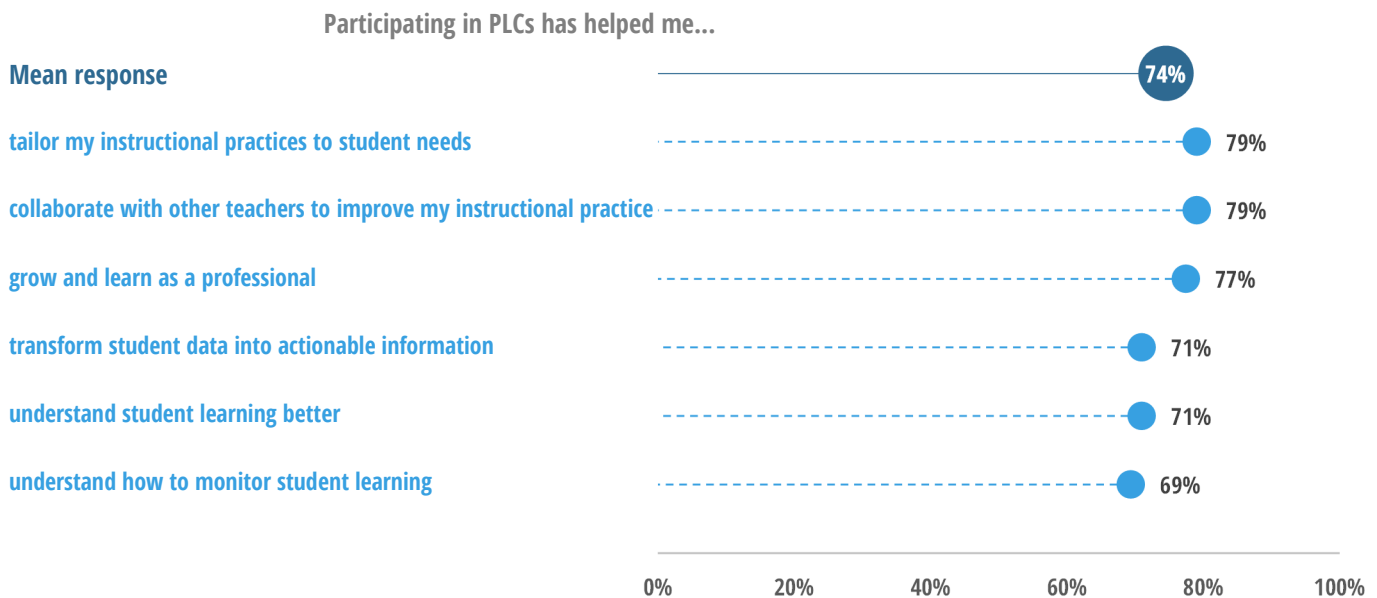
² For more information about PPfT, please visit <https://www.austinisd.org/ppft> (AISD, 2016a).

Year 2 Evaluation Findings

Professional Learning Communities

One of the goals of PLCs was to provide teachers with opportunities for professional development. Of the EEIP teachers responding to the ECS, 63% agreed PLCs helped them feel in control over their professional growth and 76% considered their PLC time to be a professional development opportunity. Teachers also reported positive impacts of participation in PLCs. On average, about three-fourths of EEIP teachers surveyed (74%) agreed that participating in PLCs helped improve their instructional practices (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Percentage of EEIP Teachers Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to Statements About Their Participation in PLCs



Source. 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey

The EEIP principals interviewed expressed a shared sense of value for professional PLCs on their campuses, but also expressed some concerns about the logistics and efficiency of PLCs in practice. For some EEIP campuses, PLCs were new in the 1st year of EEIP. Other EEIP campuses had implemented PLCs prior to EEIP, but those meetings lacked the systematic focus of PLCs under EEIP. Principals felt EEIP was a great mechanism for implementing PLCs with fidelity and focus. In the 2nd year of EEIP, most schools chose to cycle through one of four focus areas across meetings within a month (i.e., analyzing student data, analyzing student work, analyzing teacher work, and reviewing and discussing professional literature). Principals thought PLCs benefited from the narrower focus on one area per meeting in year 2.

Even though perception of the organization of PLCs improved in year 2, principals did not think the PLCs had completely morphed into their own sustainable and efficient structures yet. Time logistics continued to be an implementation challenge, with regard to both the time during the day for PLCs and the efficient use of time during the meetings. Concurrent free time during the day was typically allocated among teachers. Consequently, a tension existed between finding time for lesson plans and finding time to analyze students' work.

The EEIP PLC Model

In the 2015–2016 school year, 42 PLC leads were funded across the six schools participating in EEIP. PLC leads were teachers who volunteered for the leadership role as a PLC on their campus. PLC leads were compensated \$1,500.

Each PLC lead guided the work of one PLC. The number of PLCs on each campus varied from four to nine. PLCs were organized by grade level or vertically by content area.

Principals described their campus PLCs as communities of teachers leading teachers.

EEIP PLCs were designed as an embedded professional development mechanism for teachers. PLCs typically met one day per week after school. PLCs focused on (a) analyzing student data, (b) analyzing student work, (c) analyzing teacher work, and (d) reviewing and discussing professional literature. Most PLCs focused on one area for each meeting and cycled through the four focus areas during the meetings within each month.

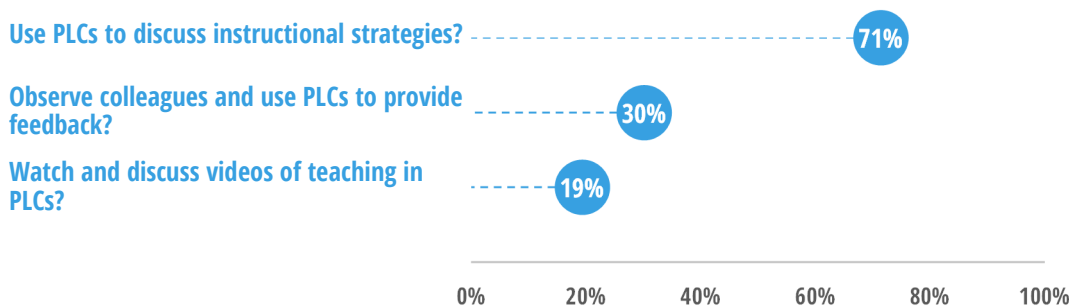
Two new elements were incorporated into EEIP PLCs in the 2016–2017 school year to improve integration of PLCs with instruction and learning in the teachers' classrooms.

- Thirty swivel cameras were assigned to PLC leads to facilitate the use of PLC time for watching colleagues teach and reflecting on practice.
- Action research teams were adopted into PLCs to support rigorous long-term studies in which teachers followed an iterative cycle of engagement in professional development activities and action research.

Principals also thought the PLC leads had room to improve with respect to their coordination across PLCs. The addition of an EEIP leadership role to help collectively organize the PLC leads was recommended (this role was successfully implemented on one EEIP campus at the discretion of the principal).

ECS results supported the principals' concerns about the efficient and on-target use of time during PLCs. EEIP teachers were surveyed about the frequency with which they engaged in specific PLC activities. The majority of EEIP teachers (71%) indicated they discussed instructional strategies at least twice per month during PLCs. However, less than one-third of EEIP teachers (30%) indicated they used PLC time to observe colleagues teach and to provide feedback at least twice per month. Less than one-fifth of EEIP teachers (19%) indicated they used PLC time to watch and discuss videos of teaching at least twice per month (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Percentage of EEIP Teachers Engaging in Specific Professional Development Activities at Least Twice per Month During PLC Time



Source. 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey

Some EEIP schools may face additional struggles finding time for PLCs for reasons independent of EEIP. Principals at campuses with an improvement required (IR) rating from the state accountability system must make some difficult decisions about how time on campus is spent. Rather than allocate time for team building or leadership development, these IR campuses may prioritize data meetings and planning with the goal of improving their accountability rating.

Peer Observation

In 2015–2016, three POs served a total of 32 teachers and logged nearly 2,200 hours of support activities across more than 1,300 instances of mentorship support. About half of the peer observers' total support time was spent engaged in gathering resources/information, conferences for support, campus or district meetings or training, and campus support. The support activities most frequently engaged in (55% of the total instances) were conferences for support, gathering resources/information, conferences for co-planning, and campus support. However, classroom observation only accounted for 4% of the POs total support hours and 6% of the total instances of support.

In a focus group, POs commented on the challenge of connecting with teachers for observation. In the first 2 years of EEIP, there was no programmatically embedded or

The EEIP Peer Observation Model

In the 2015–2016 school year, three POs were funded with EEIP. POs were master teachers with full time peer observation responsibilities. Each peer observer was assigned to two EEIP schools. POs were compensated \$5,000.

In EEIP, peer observation was specific to teachers with 4 or more years of experience. The EEIP peer observation process included:

- Collaboration with and observation of teachers on instructional practice and classroom climate
- Engaging in pre- and post-observation conferences with observed teachers
- Providing teachers with written and verbal feedback
- Supporting teachers through modeling, coaching, lesson planning, and professional development activities
- Active participation in an iterative feedback cycle of observation, reflection, goal setting, and implementation

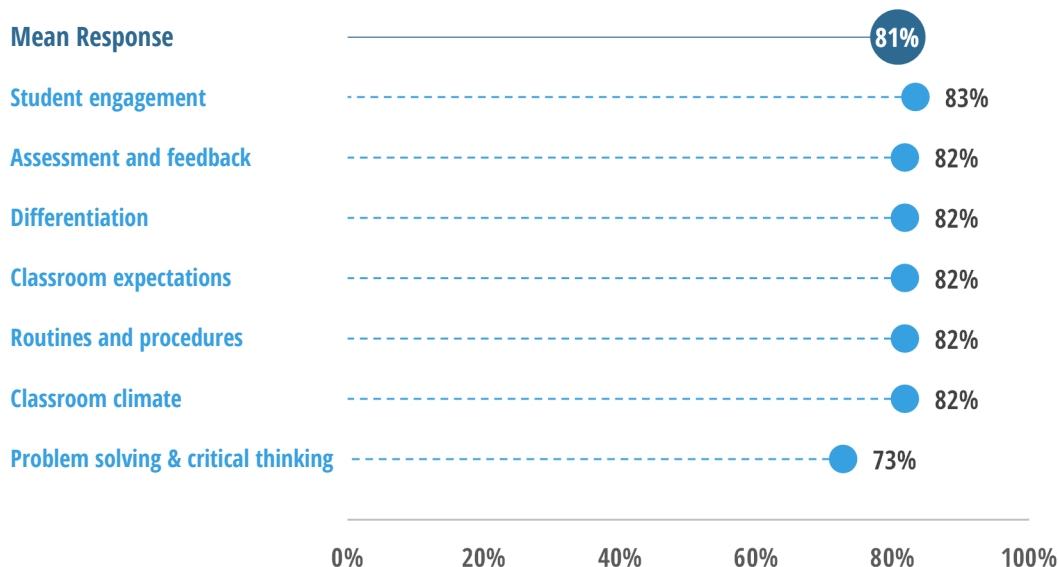
Although appraisers could encourage observation for teachers, teacher participation was voluntary in the 2015–2016 school year. In the 2016–2017 school year, the EEIP peer observation process was changed to one required observation for every teacher with 4 or more years of experience.

required pairing of POs with teachers. Consequently, POs spent considerable time selling the benefits of receiving non-evaluative observation feedback to staff. POs felt principal buy-in and advocacy were important for the connection of the peer observer with school staff. Opportunities to connect with teachers increased with a physical presence on campus. Because POs served multiple campuses, if support from the principal was not initially present, then the observation resource was not used and the lack of use perpetuated the cycle.

Principals recognized the challenge of getting teachers involved with the POs. They commented that many teachers did not know the POs existed as a resource, did not know how to access them, or did not quite trust or understand the peer observation process. Interviews revealed that principals did not seem to have a consistent understanding of their role in connecting the POs with their staff.

Despite the low numbers of teachers participating in peer observation, the POs felt they could have a positive impact on the implementation of PPfT on campuses. POs reported that they were able to help teachers engage in instructional practices guided by the PPfT rubric, and help principals understand the match between scoring and feedback on the PPfT rubric. Teachers ($n = 15$) served by POs were surveyed about the impact of the POs on the seven teaching skills evaluated under their teacher appraisals.⁴ Overall, about 80% of teachers agreed their mentoring experiences had a great or a moderate impact on their teaching skills (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Percentage of EEIP Teachers Who Rated Their Peer Observer to Have a Great or a Moderate Impact on the Teaching Skills Appraised Under PPfT



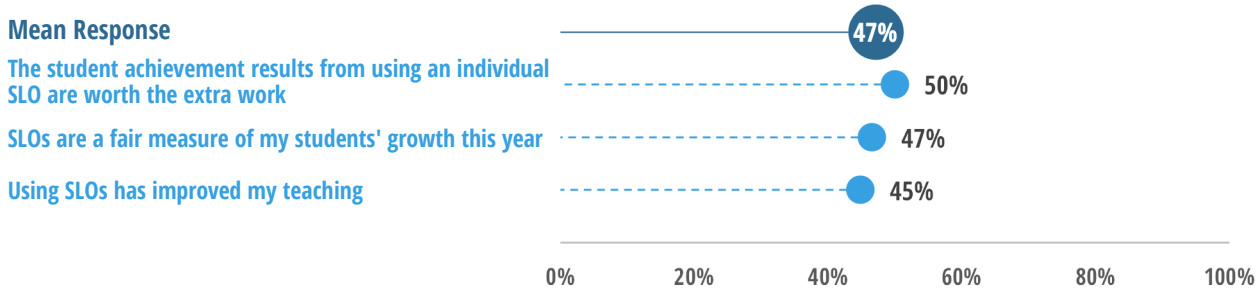
Source. 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey

⁴ For details on the skills evaluated see <https://www.austinisd.org/ppft/new-teacher> (AISD, 2016b)

Student Learning Objectives

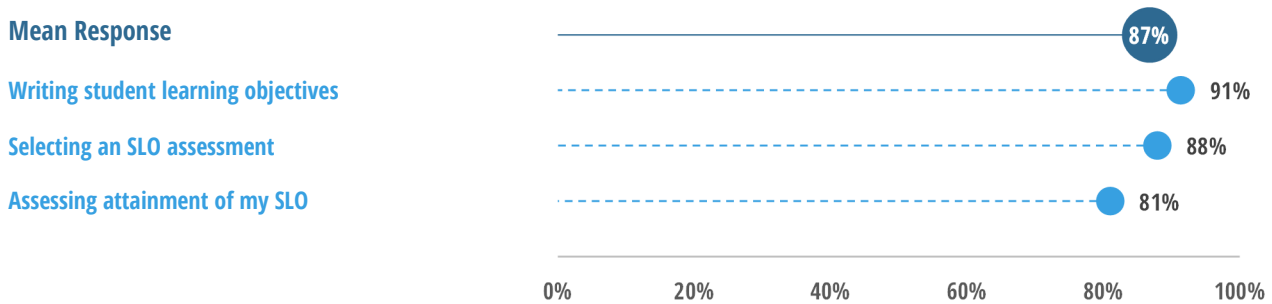
The dissatisfaction with SLOs among EEIP teachers continued into year 2 of EEIP despite the teachers' positive perceptions of support and challenge. Less than half of EEIP teachers (47%) agreed with statements about the impact and worth of SLOs (Figure 4). Yet, most teachers (87%) felt supported in the work of SLOs (Figure 5) and most teachers (79%) did not find the SLO process challenging (Figure 6).

Figure 4
Percentage of EEIP Teachers Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed to Statements About SLOs



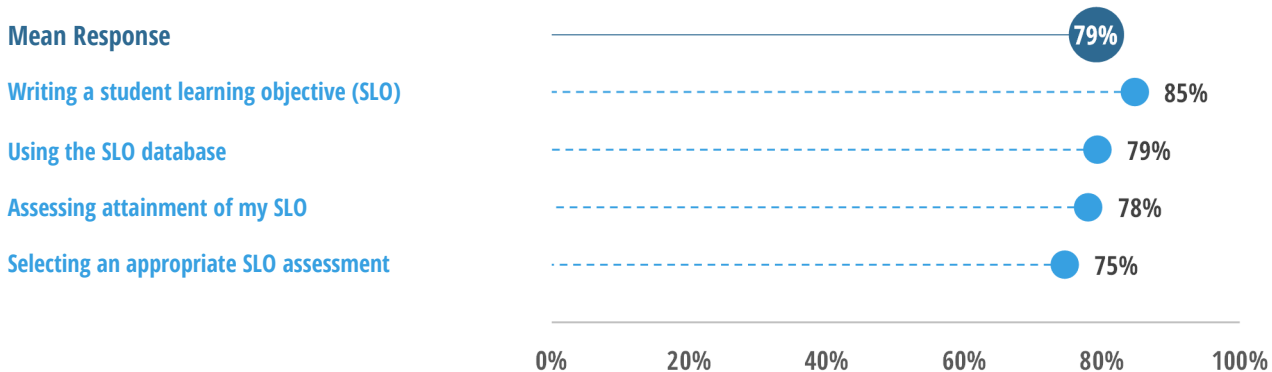
Source. 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey

Figure 5
Percentage of EEIP Teachers Who Rated the Quality of Support for SLOs Very Good or Fair



Source. 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey

Figure 6
Percentage of EEIP Teachers Who Rated Features of the SLO Process Not at All or a Little Challenging



Source. 2015–2016 Employee Coordinated Survey

Principals' perceptions of the support and challenges with SLOs were consistent with EEIP teachers' ratings. Principals thought teachers understood SLOs better in year 2 than they did in year 1 and were getting more comfortable using the SLO assessment bank. They also felt SLO facilitators did a great job making teachers aware of the resources and helping them find a suitable assessment in the bank. The increased use of the assessment bank in year 2 was attributed to greater trust in the assessments and to the lower workload involved using an existing assessment. Even though principals had generally positive perceptions of the SLO assessment bank, some principals felt that special education and early childhood education teachers struggled to find suitable assessments in the SLO test bank, and as a consequence, often had to create their own SLO assessments.

Principals' perceptions of the impact of SLOs were also consistent with EEIP teachers' ratings. Principals generally felt SLOs remained an implementation challenge in year 2 of EEIP. Principals observed minimal systematic progress monitoring of SLOs (i.e., one beginning-of-year assessment and one end-of-year assessment), and as a result, found that some teachers did not know they were not meeting their SLO goal until it was too late. Some principals also noted concerns about the connection of SLOs to high stakes

Principals observed minimal systematic progress monitoring of SLOs and expressed some concern that teachers were not taking risks or challenging themselves with strong goals, given the connection to high stakes appraisal.

appraisal. Some principals worried that teachers were not taking risks or challenging themselves with strong goals, given the stakes. Rather, the teachers were only incentivized to do well, not to set rigorous goals.

Full-Release Mentoring

In the 2015–2016 school year, the seven EEIP FRMs logged more than 8,700 hours of support activities across more than 6,500 instances of mentorship support. FRMs spent the majority of their time (i.e., more than 50%) engaged in conferences for co-planning, conferences for student progress, and co-teaching/modeling. On average, the most time-consuming support activities were master teacher observation and mentor seminars with means of 5.8 hours and 4 hours per activity, respectively. The least time-consuming activities were conferences for observation feedback, conferences for support, and classroom observation, all with means of less than 1 hour per instance.

In a focus group, FRMs expressed some challenges fitting into campuses and establishing trust in the 1st year, but by the 2nd year of EEIP they were able to form strong connections and see profound positive professional growth with their novice teachers. FRMs commented that mentored novice teachers were able to think, teach, and live their lives professionally after only a couple years of mentoring at a level that many of the mentors were not able to accomplish until 4 or 5 years on the job.

SLOs were included in EEIP as part of PPFT. SLOs are a teacher set goal of student growth that he or she strives to achieve by the end of the semester or school year and that addresses the largest group of students that teacher teaches.

The SLO process generally included:

- Collecting data to identify students' needs
- Creating an SLO assessment or selecting one from the SLO database
- Writing a learning objective and setting the growth target(s)
- Collecting baseline data and reviewing those data with the appraiser
- Monitoring progress towards goals and adjusting instruction
- Collecting post-test data and reviewing those data with the appraiser

A central office PPFT SLO team oversaw the support of teachers using the SLO process. Unique to the SLO process in EEIP were the availability of two dedicated SLO facilitators at each campus. SLO facilitators were teachers who volunteered for the leadership role as an SLO facilitator on their campus. SLO facilitators were compensated \$1,000.

EEIP SLO facilitators served as the first line of support for teachers with their SLOs. They assisted teachers with:

- Determining areas of need
- Selecting/creating SLO assessments
- Administering pre- and post-assessments
- Monitoring students' progress and growth

Interviews with EEIP principals also revealed some growing pains with the new FRM role on campus in the 1st year of EEIP. For some EEIP principals, much of the 1st year was spent trying to figure out how to integrate the autonomous FRM role into the overall campus instructional support team. However, boundaries became clearer for everyone in year 2 and principals noted improvements in the self-awareness of their novice teachers. Principals commented that teachers transitioning out of full-release mentoring seemed to know what to ask for and had a better understanding of the instructional support available to them than teachers with the same experience typically had without mentoring.

Teachers ($n = 7$) served by FRMs were surveyed about the impact of the FRMs on the seven teaching skills evaluated under their teacher appraisals. For each of the seven skills rated, 71% of teachers (i.e., five out of seven) served by FRMs agreed their mentoring experiences had a great or a moderate impact on their teaching skills. Even though the skill ratings were similar when ratings were combined across the two scale response values (i.e., *a great deal of impact* and *a moderate impact*), the problem solving and critical thinking skill stood out among the seven skills because it received all five ratings in the *great deal of impact* response category.

Campus-Based Mentoring

The 24 CBMs for 3rd-year teachers logged more than 900 hours of support activity across more than 800 instances of mentorship support in the 2015–2016 school year. The vast majority of CBM support (approximately 80% of both hours and instances) was spent engaging in conferences for support, conferences for lesson planning, and mentor PLCs. On average, the most time-consuming support activities were conferences for student progress, classroom set up, and mentor PLCs with means of 1.5, 1.4, and 1.4 hours per activity, respectively. The least time-consuming activities were conferences for feedback and beginning teacher PLCs, each with means of less than 1 hour per activity.

To explore the challenges of the CBM role further, CBMs were surveyed about their training and support. Although only five CBMs responded, three out of five indicated the mentor seminars were valuable, and four out of five agreed they received enough support from other EEIP staff to effectively mentor a 3rd-year teacher.

Unfortunately, all the principals interviewed felt the mentoring for 3rd-year teachers was the weakest part of the EEIP implementation. They thought the implementation stacked the availability of mentoring resources for new teachers and experienced teachers, yet left very few mentoring resources for 3rd-year teachers. Principals thought the 3rd-year teachers were falling through the cracks of the mentoring model. A common challenge experienced by principals was understanding how to monitor the extent and effectiveness of mentoring for their 3rd-year teachers.

Teachers served by CBMs were surveyed about the impact of the CBMs on the seven teaching skills evaluated in their teacher appraisals; only four responded to the survey. All four responding 3rd-year teachers provided a rating of at least *a small impact* of the CBM on the seven teaching skills. Between four out of four and three out of four of the responding teachers rated their CBM as having *a great deal* or *a moderate impact* on all seven teaching skills.

Summary of the Year 2 Evaluation Findings

Overall, EEIP participants valued full-release mentoring, mentoring for 3rd-year teachers, peer observation, PLCs, and the support they received for their SLOs. Participants perceived the FRM implementation to be operating well. Participant perceptions of 3rd-year mentoring were mixed. EEIP participants perceived that peer observation had a positive impact on the instructional skills evaluated under PPfT. The majority of EEIP teachers considered their PLC time to be a professional development opportunity and perceived that PLCs had a positive impact on their instruction. EEIP participants also reported being well supported in their SLO work and found the work less challenging than in year 1.

However, despite improvements in participant perceptions of PLCs, peer observation, and SLOs from year 1, some challenges remained in year 2 of EEIP. Participants' feedback revealed that PLCs might be struggling with time efficiency issues and minimal use of PLC time for watching peers' teaching lessons and providing feedback. Due to the voluntary nature of working with a PO, peer observation remained underused by experienced teachers. EEIP teachers perceived that SLOs had little impact on students' achievement or on instructional practices. EEIP principals noted the potentially conflicting incentives for SLOs because of their inclusion in high stakes appraisal. Given the mixed perceptions of 3rd-year mentoring, it was unclear if the extent of mentorship was insufficient or if the mixed perceptions were driven by differences in dedicated EEIP resources (i.e., FRMs and POs in full-time support roles with no teaching responsibilities).



EEIP in Year 3 (2016–2017)

The 3rd-year implementation of EEIP in AISD will include a few differences from the first 2 years. Changes to the EEIP implementation were driven by a combination of responsive adjustments based on program participants' feedback and changes to the PPFT implementation in AISD. Year 3 adjustments involved changes to the EEIP PLC, peer observation, and SLO processes. The program adjustments were designed to better support program participants in their EEIP-related work, but also designed to help teachers in their work under PPFT.

In the 2016–2017 school year, implementation of PPFT was expanded to the entire school district and was integrated with teacher compensation to form a “Human Capital System that blends appraisal, compensation, leadership pathways and professional development.”⁵ As an existing element of EEIP since the 1st year of the grant, PPFT had already linked teachers' performance on SLOs, classroom observations, professional development activities, and school-wide student growth to teacher appraisal. However, in the 2016–2017 school year, PPFT further linked a teacher's appraisal to his or her compensation. Consequently, even though the basic components of PPFT did not change, the stakes associated with them did change in year 3 of EEIP.

PLCs in year 3

The structure of PLCs in year 3 of EEIP remained the same as year 2: weekly documented meetings with a focus on analyzing student data, analyzing student work, analyzing teacher work, and reviewing and discussing professional literature. All PLCs have a PLC lead to coordinate the activities of the teachers, but only two of the six participating EEIP schools elected to have a leadership role to coordinate across the PLC leads at a school. New to PLCs in year 3 of EEIP were professional action research teams (PARTs). Each PART consisted of a team of three to seven teachers from a PLC. The teams (a) develop a professional development plan based on their needs and the needs of their students (including baseline assessment of student need), (b) participate in related professional development activities, (c) implement learned strategies in their classrooms, (d) complete a post-implementation assessment to determine growth, and then (e) document the implementation and impact of the strategies on teaching and learning in their classrooms.

PARTs are rigorous long-term studies in which teachers use a repeating cycle of engagement in professional development activities and action research. The PART structure is integral to the PLC structure (i.e., analyzing student data, analyzing student work, analyzing teacher work, and reviewing and discussing professional literature). The integration of PARTs into PLCs under EEIP was designed to help teachers improve the connection of their work in the PLCs with their work in classrooms by engaging teachers in relevant, ongoing professional growth. To facilitate the use of PLC time for watching colleagues teach, 30 swivel cameras were assigned to PLC leads for the purpose of recording teachers in their classrooms. The recordings are to be viewed during PLCs to facilitate use of the time critiquing and

⁵ <https://www.austinisd.org/ppft/hc-system> (AISD, 2016c)

reflecting upon each other's practice. The implementation of PARTs in EEIP PLCs serve a dual purpose. In addition to supporting the connection of PLC time with goal-oriented, long-term teacher professional development activities, PARTs also serve as a mini pilot of the professional development units (PDUs) planned for PPFT in the 2017–2018 school year. The PDUs of PPFT are one of the ways teachers will be able to annually earn professional points under the PPFT compensation framework.

Peer Observation in Year 3

The process of peer observation in year 3 of EEIP remains the same as in prior years (i.e., a teacher-driven, non-evaluative teaching observation with post-observation constructive feedback on the PPFT instructional practice strands). However, to help address the low use of peer observation among experienced teachers and the challenges associated with connecting POs with the teachers on campuses, the scale of the peer observation implementation increased in year 3. In the first 2 years of EEIP, observations were a voluntary component of EEIP for experienced teachers. In the 2nd year of EEIP, only 32 teachers chose to participate. In year 3 of EEIP, at least one observation was required for every experienced teacher at EEIP schools ($N = 152$). The change in the scale of the EEIP peer observation implementation is expected to increase experienced teachers' participation in peer observation by upwards of 500%.

SLOs in Year 3

Both teachers and principals on EEIP campuses were pleased with the support teachers received for SLOs. The support structure for SLOs remained the same in year 3, with two SLO facilitators on every EEIP campus. However, perceptions of the impact of SLOs continued to be a challenge in EEIP heading into year three. Across the first 2 years of the program, EEIP teachers consistently rated SLOs low with respect to impact on student achievement, as a fair measure of student growth, and as means to improve teaching. EEIP principals recognized the issue of teacher buy-in for SLOs and called attention to the lack of progress monitoring and the conflicting incentives of appraisal and compensation.

To help address the issues with teacher buy-in and the resulting lack of impact on students' achievement and on instructional practice, EEIP program staff (i.e., PLC leads and SLO facilitators) are encouraging teachers to use SLOs in their PARTs. Use of SLOs in PARTs is intended to further integrate the work of PPFT into the PLC structure and to help teachers build ongoing formative assessment and progress monitoring into their SLO process. Numerous benefits are potentially associated with teachers focusing on their SLOs in PLCs. For example, integration of SLOs into teacher PLCs:

- Helps maximize teacher time, particularly given the challenges associated with finding time for professional development activities
- Aligns the work of SLOs with the four focus areas of EEIP PLCs: analyzing student data, analyzing student work, analyzing teacher work, and reviewing professional literature
- Can provide a means to measuring growth for PARTs that is integrated into teachers' larger work under EEIP and PPFT

- Should help teachers see SLOs as a process rather than a pre-post assessment, and consequently increase the regularity of ongoing progress monitoring
- Can provide a means to measuring growth for PARTs that is integrated into teachers' larger work under EEIP and PPfT
- Potentially connects the instructional strategies being implemented with PARTs to the instructional practices necessary for students' growth on their SLOs

The struggles EEIP teachers experienced with the availability of SLO assessments for special education and early childhood education in the assessment bank were not unique to EEIP. Feedback provided to SLO facilitators supporting the work both of EEIP and of non-EEIP teachers participating in PPfT aligned around the same availability issues. In response, the AISD SLO team added a number of assessments to the assessment bank for year three of EEIP. For the 2016–2017 school year, the number of early childhood assessments were doubled for a total of 14, six pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade assessments were added where there previously were none, and three special education assessments were added for a total of nine.

Additional Work in Year 3 of EEIP

In addition to the responsive changes made to the EEIP implementation in year 3, the year 2 evaluation highlighted areas to explore further in year 3. In particular, the year 3 evaluation should monitor the implementation of PARTs (including the success of assimilating SLOs into the EEIP PLC structure). The year 3 evaluation should also explore mentees' and CBMs' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the CBM model to better understand the success of the mentoring model and its implementation under EEIP.

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October 2016

Publication 15.76