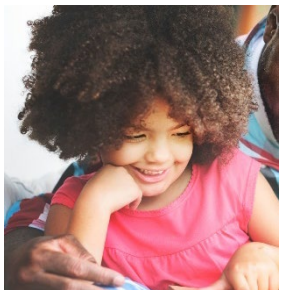

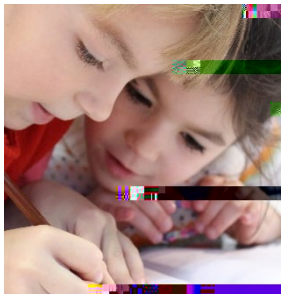

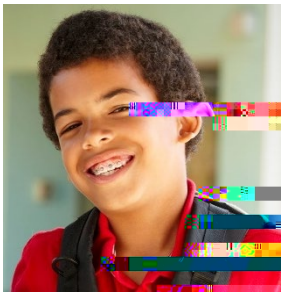

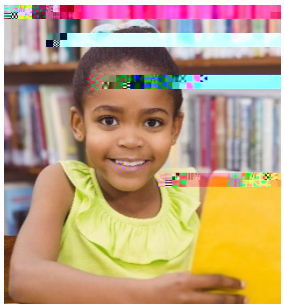

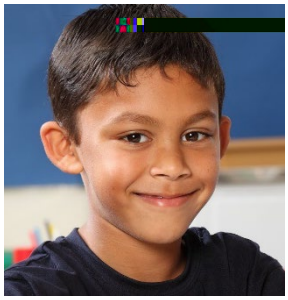

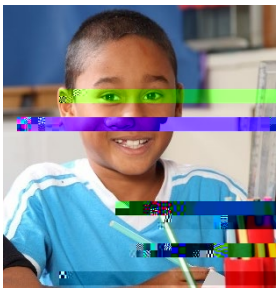

Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Evaluation Report:

2016–17 and 2017–18

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Figure 3.5 Algebra I and English I EOC Exam Outcomes for Charter School Students

- Establishing defined roles and responsibilities, and developing campus teams. Teachers noted the utility of a supportive system and the importance of creating a positive culture among staff to build a sense of community as critical to establishing a new campus.
- Receiving critical support from either their CMO or district office staff while planning a new charter school campus, and guidance from TEA for guidelines such as how to submit amendments for new items, guidance on how to spend funding, expectations for curriculum, information on the required number of school days, and other school-related policies.

Organizational Practices

The study explored a number of key factors related to start-up grantee campus school organization and management, including important practices related to the charter school campus mission, and parent involvement with the school and in their child's education. Key findings include:

- Principals rated the use of data to inform instruction and hiring exemplary teachers to support other teachers among the most important practices for executing their campus' mission.
- Principals rated the regular individualized teacher-parent communication and having a system for parents to monitor their students' progress among the most important practices for getting parents involved in their child's education.
- Principals felt that word-of-mouth advertising and online advertising about the school, and current teachers recruiting other educators were among the most effective teacher recruitment methods.
- When hiring new teachers, principals shared that strong pedagogical skills and fit with the educational philosophy of the school were the most important criteria.
- Principals rated providing teachers with regular feedback on their instructional practices and providing dedicated planning time were among the most important practices for retaining high-quality teachers.
- Similar to teacher recruitment, principals cited word-of-mouth advertising from parents of currently enrolled students as the most effective method for attracting students. The use of social media was a distant second in terms of effectiveness in this category.

Instructional Practices

After establishing effective organizational practices and methods for recruiting and retaining high quality teachers, providing support for teachers is essential for charter campuses to deliver the highest quality of instruction possible to their students. Key findings related to instructional practices are as follows:

- Principals shared that the use of formative data to inform instruction and establishing a positive relationship between the teacher and student were among the most impactful instructional practices observed at their schools.
- Principals felt that providing feedback to teachers after walkthroughs or informal observations and reviewing student data with teachers were among the most impactful approaches for improving instructional practices.
- Overall, classroom observation scores were in the upper-range at charter school start-up grantee campuses, indicating relatively high-quality teacher-student interactions across multiple domains.

- Observations of classrooms at charter school start-up grantee campuses reveal that Emotional Support domain scores were higher at start-up grantee campuses than high-performing charter schools. Emotional Support domain scores at start-up grantee campuses may be indicative of teachers providing supports for students in at-risk situations
- The Classroom Organization domain was significantly lower for teachers at start-up grantee campuses than it was for teachers at high-performing charter schools. This finding may be reflective of more experienced teachers working at high-performing charter schools and/or additional classroom management training or systems in place at high-performing charter schools.
- The use of in-class small group, differentiated, and individualized instruction, as well as the development of strong teacher-student relationships, were ranked among the most impactful approaches for closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students. These same methods, in addition to targeted pull-out instruction by an interventionist, were rated as most impactful for closing the achievement gap for low-performing students.

School Climate and Staff Morale

There is a wide array of factors that contribute to high staff morale and the development of a positive campus environment. The study examined the climate, staff morale, and teaching conditions at charter schools start-up grantee campuses.

- Half of the principals at charter school start-up grantee campuses “strongly ag0.8(u)-6g2 498.36d -

traditional school campuses. For Algebra I and English I EOC exams for students enrolled in the high school grantee campus, after controlling for differences in student and school characteristics, students enrolled in the campus showed statistically higher Algebra I and English I EOC exam scores, compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools.

When comparing the overall performance of start-up grantee campuses to the performance of students in different student groups, in most cases, the STAAR results for each student group are very similar to the overall results. The consistency of results across student groups indicates that the overall results are not driven by the performance of any particular student group.

An additional descriptive analysis of early elementary data found that, ofta fo346 0 d fos, 6

- Across all charter schools, principals tended to rank some of the same teacher support approaches among the five most important (e.g., reviewing student performance data with teachers, coaching support feedback after observations, PLCs), but principals at high-performing charter school campuses tended to be more data-focused than their peers at other charter schools as they also used student achievement data to gauge the performance of teachers.
- For high-performing charter school campuses, average classroom observation scores for the "Emotional Support", "

- Principals at high-performing and other charter school campuses were in agreement that developing strong teacher-student relationships, effectively engaging students in the classroom, and having clear behavioral expectations were the three most impactful approaches to maintaining positive interactions between teachers and students and among students. However, the following differentiating approaches were evident through principal survey data at high-performing charter schools:
  - The use of proactive steps to curb misbehavior in the classroom; and
  - The establishment of strong anti-bullying policies.

Summary of Key Findings

This evaluation report is the first in a series of annual reports related to the Texas Public Charter School Programlas.3(o)-6.6i9rw.-3(s)-1.3(.)]g p hhtm t8Tw 1.63 0 Td frfowul7(e)-3(x-5.5(i)10.6(o)-29(u)2.3(rb at)-3(io))

Chapter 1—Introductionand Background

Overview of the Public Charter School Program-Start Up Grant

In 2016, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded a five-year Public Charter School Program Start Up Grant from the U.S. Department of Education (ED).[1] The goals of this grant for ED are to increase national understanding of the charter school model by

- Providing financial assistance for the planning, program design, and initial implementation of charter schools;
- Evaluating the effects of such schools, including the effects on students, student achievement, staff, and parents; and
- Expanding the number of high-quality charter schools available to students.

Under the terms of the federal grant, TEA received funding for approximately 10 to 15 new charter school campuses annually, for a total of 40 to 60 new campuses over the five-year grant award period.[2] Awards will be issued by TEA to four different cohorts of grantees. The first cohort consisted of nine campuses receiving funding from TEA from August 2016 through July 2019. Similarly, the second cohort of 17 campuses received funding from TEA May 2017 through July 2020.

Table 1.1 provides a list of Cohort 1 and 2 campuses funded through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

Over the course of this five-year grant period, TEA expects to fund two additional cohorts of grantee recipients.

Purpose of the Report

The broad purpose of this evaluation is to:

- Examine the effectiveness and impact of the Public Charter School Program – Start-Up Grant;
- Identify promising practices exhibited by grantees and successful charter schools within the state; and
- Examine student and teacher recruitment strategies within start-up grantee campuses.

To accomplish these broad research goals, this report addresses the following five research objectives:

- Objective 1 — Identify best or promising practices in high-quality charter schools within the state
- Objective 2 — Identify best or promising practices within Public Charter School Program – Start Up Grant recipients
- Objective 3 — Examine the impact of the Public Charter School Program – Start-Up Grant
- Objective 4 — Examine if and how Public Charter School Program – Start-Up Grant recipients attract, recruit, admit, enroll, serve, and retain students
- Objective 5 — Examine if and how Public Charter School Program – Start-Up Grant recipients attract, recruit, and retain highly-qualified instructors

This current evaluation report covers the May 2017 to August 2018 period. Subsequent reports will follow existing (Cohorts 1 and 2) and new (Cohorts 3 and 4) charter school campuses funded through the charter school start-up grant.[4]

TEA contracted with Safal Partners and its research associates, Mathematica Policy Research and Gibson Consulting Group, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

Organization of the Report

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 provides information related to the practices of Public Charter School Start-Up grantee campuses. Chapter 3 provides results from preliminary analyses related to the performance of charter school start-up grantee campuses. t

Chapter 2—Practices at Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses

This chapter investigates practices at new charter school campuses funded through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

Findings in this chapter are generally organized into two areas:

1) Planning and getting a new charter school campus off the ground
2) Operating a new charter school campus and serving students

Practices related to the following key areas are explored in this chapter:

- Organizational practices (including practices related to getting a new campus up and running);
- Teacher recruitment and retention strategies;
- Student recruitment and retention strategies;
- Instructional practices (including methods used to close the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students); and
- Practices related to maintaining a positive school climate.

Data and Methods

To explore practices at charter school start-up grantee campuses, the evaluation relied on a charter school principal survey,[10] grantee site visits, and administrative data provided by TEA. Practices in this chapter of the report are based on the perspectives of principals and teachers at charter school start-up grantee campuses, and classroom observations conducted for the evaluation.[9] The survey for this evaluation was administered to all charter school principals across the state in spring 2018; fifteen of these respondents were start-up grantee principals. See

The majority of principals (80%) and teacher groups (70%) discussed the importance of devel 0 Td (68(i.2(f)-nd (68(

at these start-up charter campuses received support from either their CMO or district office staff. This support came in various forms, but generally provided structure to planning activities. Some of the planning support principals received included purchasing educational materials, providing curriculum or curricular support, developing student handbooks, building processes for teacher trainings and student orientations, and guiding school uniform decisions. Principals also received support in the form of funding "to sustain this charter work in addition to the grant money" (along with support to help track expenditures).

Half of the start-up principals interviewed indicated that TEA supported them by providing grantee guidelines in various ways. In this context, school leaders refer to guidelines on how to submit amendments for new items, how to spend funding, expectations for curriculum, information on the required number of school days, and other school-related policies. One principal referenced the TEA charter school summit as a platform for answering grantee unknowns. After attending, this principal was able to "leave there and start building these pieces that we didn't know." Similarly, another respondent shared that "the guidelines that TEA has set has just kept us on track. If we didn't have those guidelines…would we really be using that money effectively?"

A few principals that were interviewed specifically cited the availability of TEA staff in addressing questions and concerns. One principal shared that TEA staff are "always answering my questions and

Figure 2.4 Start-Up Grantee Principal Survey Responses: Most Important Criteria for Hiring New Teachers

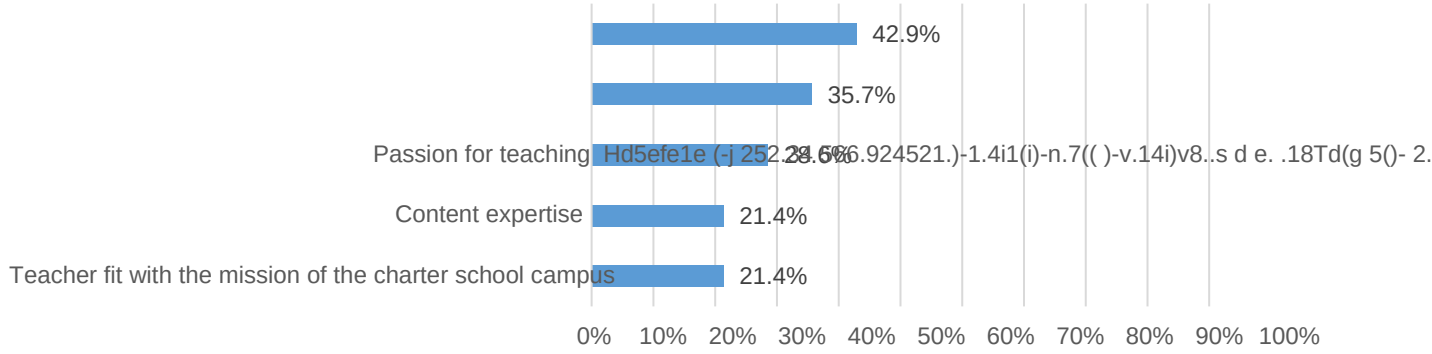


Figure 2.5 Start-Up Grantee Principal Survey Responses: Most Heavily Weighted Criteria When Considering Whether to Retain a Teacher

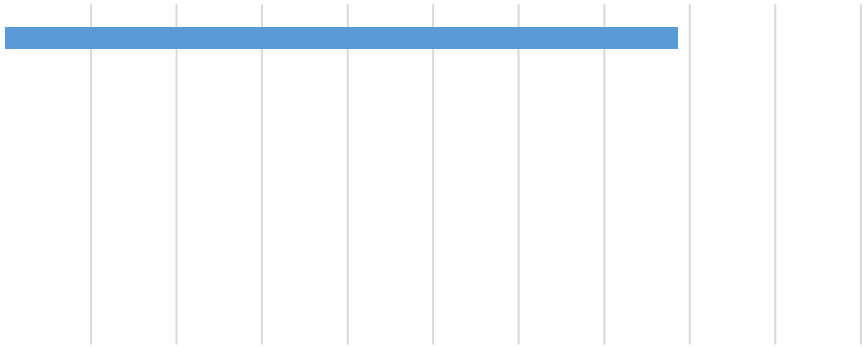
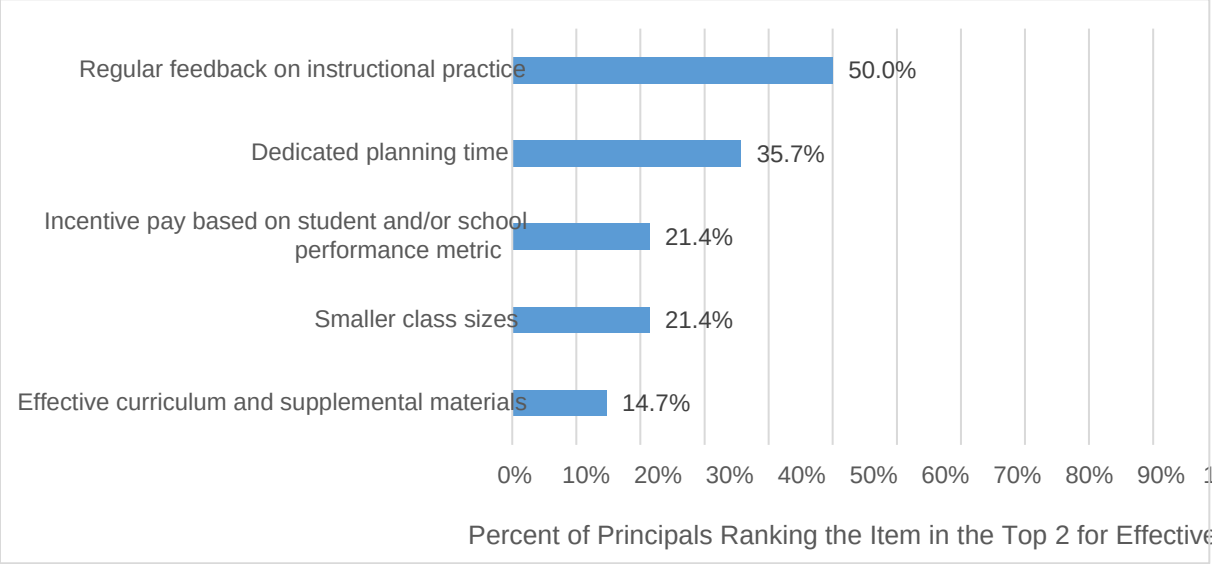


Figure 2.6 Start-Up Grantee Principal Survey Responses: Most Effective Methods for Retaining High-Quality Teachers



Source: Spring 2018 Charter School Campus Principal Survey.
Note: Results based on 14 responses from principals at campuses who have received funding through the Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant.

Comparison of Teacher Retention and Mobility Patterns for Teachers at Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Campuses and Comparable Traditional Public School Campuses

During both principal interviews and teacher focus groups during start-up site visits, communication with parents was seen as a key method for developing positive relationships.

Four of 10 principals stressed the importance of parent communication. These school leaders indicated that “parent communication is probably the biggest thing [we've] worked on.” [illegible]

[redacted]

studentsthat left

Considering this, the evaluation examined the following at charter school start-up grantee campuses:

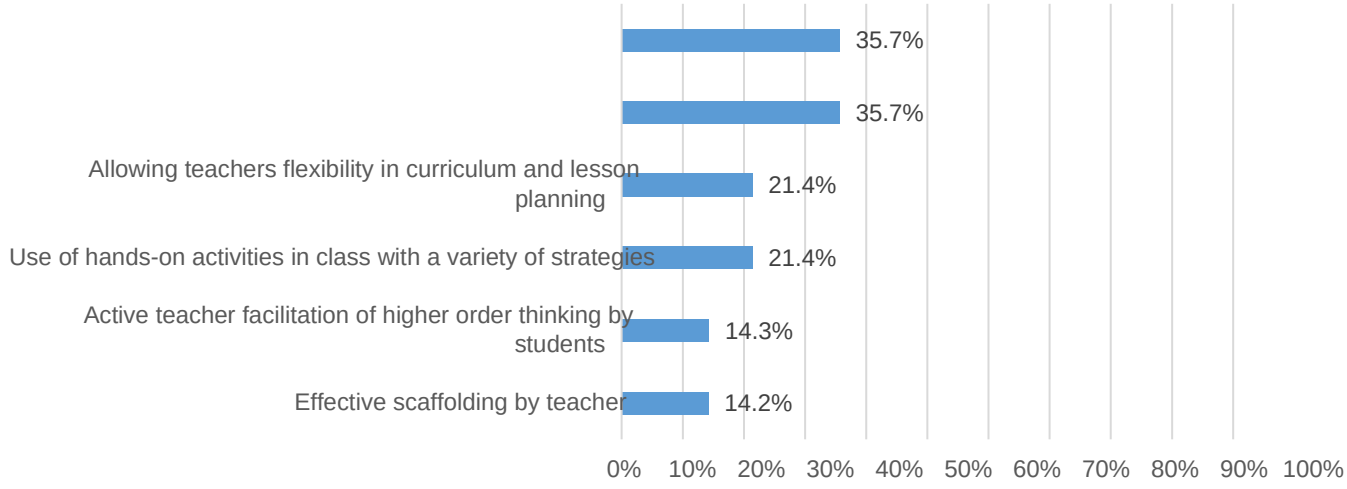
- Frequently observed instructional practices
- Impactful instructional practices
- Impactful teacher supports for improving instructional practices
- Approaches for closing the achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students
- Methods for closing the achievement gaps for low-performing students.

Additionally, data related to instructional practices observed at start-up grantee campuses are presented in this section.

Most Frequently Observed Instructional Practices

As Figure 2.9 shows, "Establishing positive relationships between teachers and students" was the most frequently observed instructional approach at start-up grantee campuses, with 67% of principal survey respondents ranking this as the first or second most commonly observed instructional practice. Other instructional practices ranked as one of the top two most frequently observed approaches were "M

Figure 2.10 Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees: Most Impactful Instructional Practices



student academic achievement. Teachers also indicated that they spent time building student confidence, working to correct negative self-perceptions, and providing a safe and stable learning environment.

Participants in four of the 10 teacher focus groups also mentioned that they used tutorials to target particular areas of improvement, citing that tutorials can be held in class and

Approaches to Developing and Maintaining a Positive School Climate

As Figure 2.16 shows, a "Culture of respect between students and teachers" (36%) and "Genuine care for students" (29%) were most commonly ranked as the first or second most important indicators of a positive school by start-up principal survey respondents. The "Development of a family atmosphere" (21%), "Culture of respect among students" (21%), and "Mutual respect for colleague's ideas" (14%) rounded out principals' perspectives on the five most important indicators of a positive school climate.

Figure 2.16 Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees: Mesl .r3Importrs e cc -0. Tw 10.978 0ooiBa(.0.9e0 Tc 0 TTc 0 Tw 6

Methods for Maintaining Positive Student/Teacher and Student-to-Student Interactions

As Figure 2.7 illustrates, setting clear behavioral expectations (53%), developing strong teacher-student relationships (46%), and effective student engagement in the classroom (39%) were ranked by principalsurvey respondents as the top three methods for maintaining positive student/teacher and student-to-student interactions.

- Strong demonstrated pedagogical skills and teacher fit with the educational philosophy of the schools were rated by principals as the two most important considerations when hiring new teachers.

- Principals and teachers cited the importance of maintaining a positive school culture, providing instructional supports through regular feedback and lesson modeling, and allowing for adequate planning time as key drivers for retaining high-quality teachers.

- Principals shared that instructional effectiveness is by far the most important consideration when deciding whether to retain a teacher, and the use of teacher evaluation rubrics and observation tools were most commonly used by school leaders to make this assessment.

- Principals at new charter school campuses were split on the use of bonus pay based on student performance as a means to incentivize teachers.

- Start-up grantee teachers are less likely to have advanced degrees, are typically younger, typically have less experience in teaching, more likely to be first-year teachers, and have less tenure at their school than their counterparts at traditional public school campuses.

- Teacher retention between 2016–17 and 2017–18 was lower at charter school start-up grantee

- Providing feedback to teachers based on walkthroughs and informal observations and the review of student performance data with teachers were rated by principals as the most impactful teacher supports for improving instructional practices.

- Public Charter School Start-Up Grant recipients received higher CLASS observation scores in "Emotional Support" and "Student Engagement" domains than high-performing charter schools,
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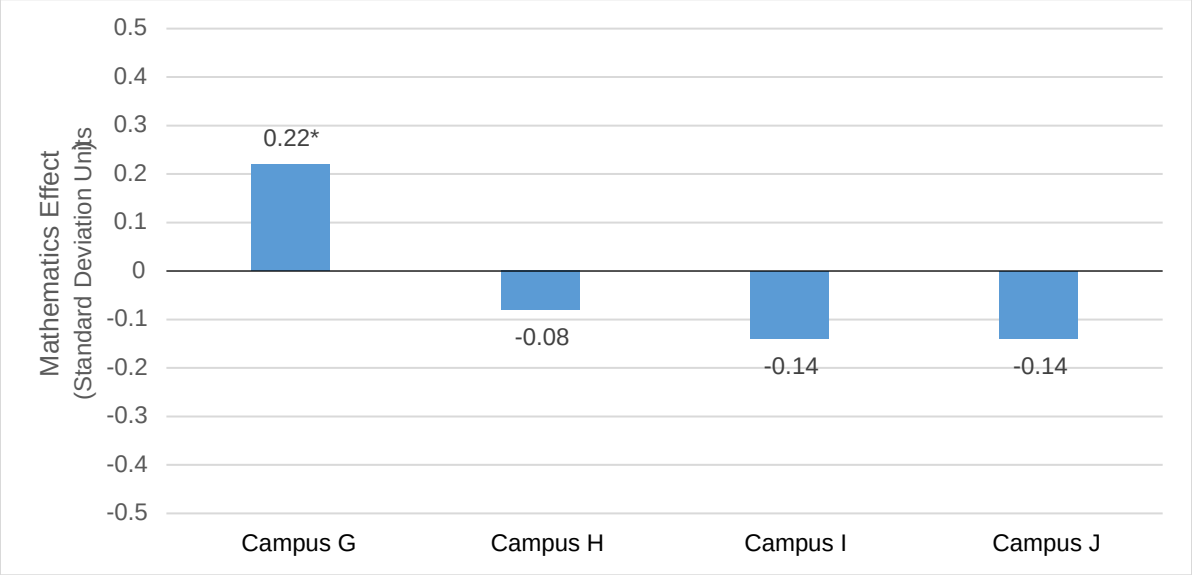
Chapter 3—Charter School Startup Grantee Outcomes

This chapter presents findings from a series of statistical analyses examine the relationship between

Figure 3.1 STAAR Mathematics Outcomes for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses, 2016–17



** Indicates statistically significant where p < 0.05.*
Source: Public Education Information Management System STAAR data, Texas Education Agency, 2016–17.
Note: Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 581 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 581 matched comparison students.

Figure 3.2 STAAR Reading Outcomes for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses, 2016–17

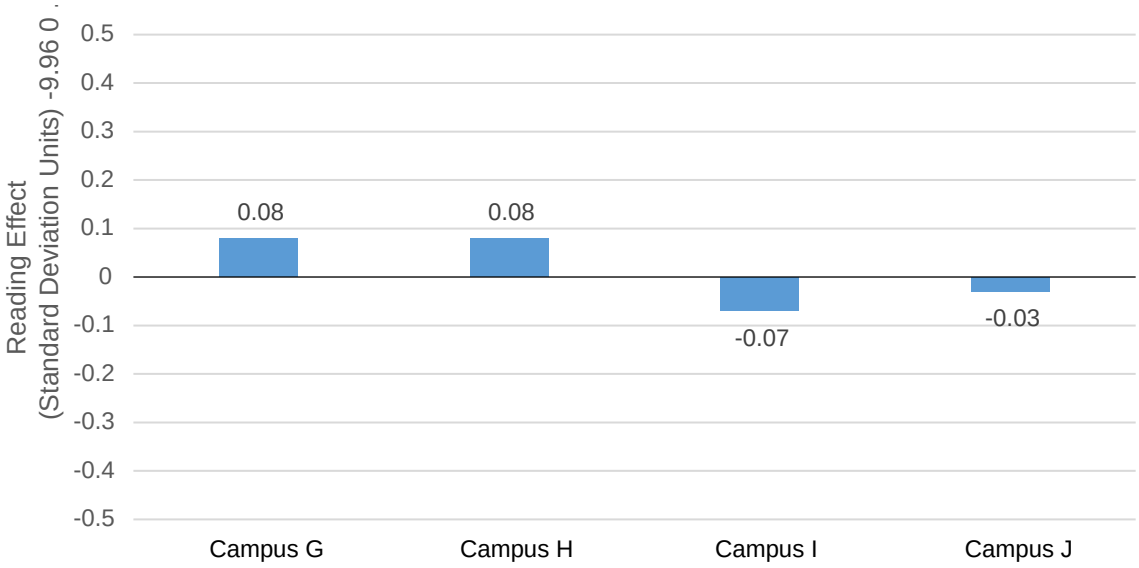
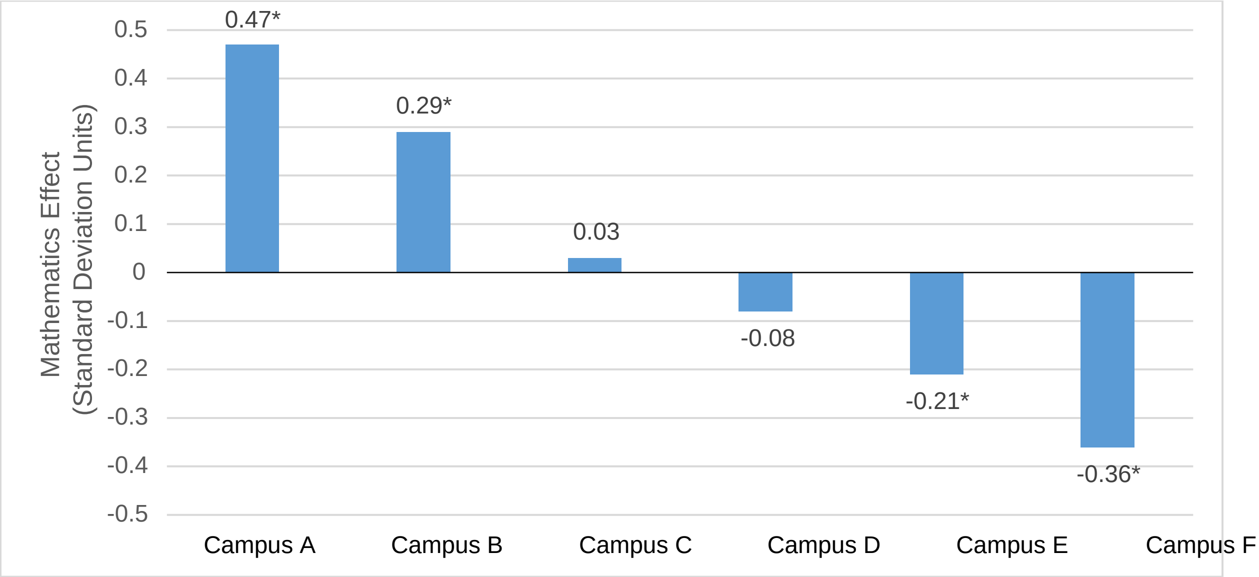


Figure 3.3 STAAR Mathematics Outcomes for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Middle School Campuses, 2016–17



** Indicates statistically significant where p < 0.05.*

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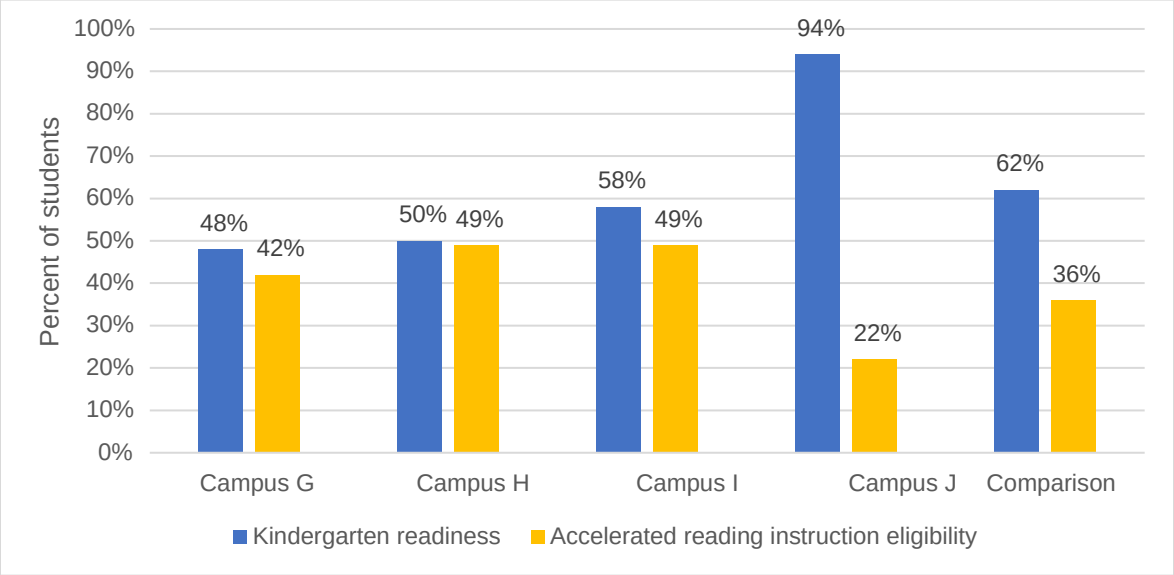
Figure 3.6 Kindergarten Readiness and Early Reading Indicators for Charter School Start-Up Grantee Elementary Campuses, 2016–17



Source: Public Education Information Management System databases, Texas Education Agency, 2016–17.

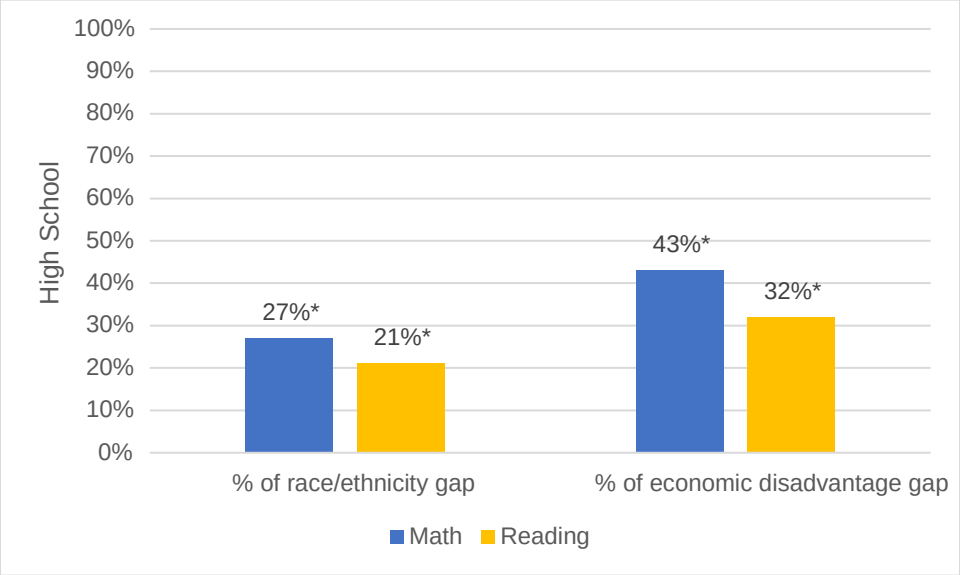
The results of the student group models are presented in Appendix E. The summary is that in most cases the STAAR results for each student group are very similar to the overall results, with overall effects generally small and insignificant and estimated effects for specific student groups generally very similar to the overall effects. Across the different student groups and grade ranges, there are a couple of cases where the results are not as similar for a particular outcome and student group. These cases are caused by instances where one or more campuses have substantially different estimated effects for a particular outcome and student group than the overall estimated effect for those campuses.

grantee campuses' reading scores, the feeder district race/ethnicity gap ranges from 0.45 to 0.95 standard deviations, and the economic disadvantage gap ranges from 0.45 to 0.66 standard deviations. The elementary grantee campus with the largest estimated reading effect has an effect equal to 8% of the feeder district race/ethnicity gap and 14% of the economic disadvantage gap. This means that, in terms of the achievement gaps, the STAAR Reading effects are much smaller than for STAAR Mathematics. On the other end of the scale, the elementary grantee campus with the lowest estimated

On the other end of the scale, the charter school start-up grantee campus with the lowest estimated STAAR Mathematics effect has a negative effect with magnitude equal to 13% of the feeder district race/ethnicity gap, and 9% of the economic disadvantage gap. The other four middle school grantee campuses have effects with magnitudes of less than 6% of the feeder district race/ethnicity and economic disadvantage test score gaps. Note that these percentages are larger than those for STAAR Re(a)2.8(n)5.3(eg)5.6(a)13e1v w 1.326 ag4gM6o6tag l.13.9(.1 1 9(ag)2d63.1(ef)10.002 Tc -ew 3.369sy)-4.4

On the other end of the scale, the charter school start

Figure 3.11 Algebra I and English I EOC Exam Outcomes for Charter School Start-Up Grantee High School Campuses Compared to Feeder District Achievement Gaps, 2016–17



** Indicates statistically significant where p < 0.05.*
Source: Public Education Information Management System STAAR data, Texas Education Agency, 2016–17.
Note: Reported effects are statistically adjusted for student and school characteristics. Test scores were standardized by subject, grade, and year, based on statewide means and standard deviations. Sample size includes 23 students attending Charter School Start-up Grantee campuses and 23 matched comparison students. See Appendix F for full results and details.

Summary of Key Fie-3.3(ta)-8(i6)-8(g2(K)]TJ 0 C /P <</MCID 146(A)11.7(R)16(dar)2.3((ta)]TJ .6(i)8.

estimated effect approximately equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 51st percentile compared to the 69th percentile, and the other had an effect approximately equivalent to the difference between the 51st percentile and the 62nd percentile. Two other grantee campuses showed statistically lower STAAR Mathematics scores compared to the matched sample, the first equivalent to the difference between scoring at the 51st percentile compared to the 37th percentile, and the second to the difference between the 51st percentile and the 42nd percentile. The overall average effect across the six charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses on STAAR Mathematics

gap, and 49% of the economic disadvantage gap. The grantee campus with the lowest estimated math effect had a negative effect with magnitude equal to 2% of the feeder district race/ethnicity gap, and 4% of the economic disadvantage gap. This effect is therefore almost half the size of the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged and non economically disadvantaged students in feeder districts, but less than a third as big as the gap based on student race/ethnicity. The other two elementary grantee campuses had estimated mathematics effects with magnitudes of less than 30% of the feeder district race/ethnicity and economic disadvantage test score gaps.

- Comparing estimated effects on STAAR reading scores for charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses to the feeder district test score gaps, the elementary campus with the largest estimated reading effect has an effect equal to 9% of the feeder district race/ethnicity gap, and 14% of the economic disadvantage gap. The elementary campus with the lowest estimated reading effect has a negative effect with magnitude equal to 4% of the feeder district race/ethnicity gap and 12% of the economic disadvantage feaagpen

Chapter 4—Best or Promising Practices at High-Performing Charter School Campuses

This chapter investigates pr

To supplement these survey results, the study includes data from site visits to 10 charter school campuses determined to be high performing based on statistical models measuring the academic performance of charter campuses designated as high quality by TEA. Of the 100 campuses included in the analyses, campuses that fell in the top half of the overall average performance were classified as "high-performing" and became the subject of the analysis of high performing campuses within this evaluation.[22] Site visi

group intervention with teachers," and a "focus on rigor" both as factors contributing to the success of their campus. For some principals, this focus results from "a strong culture of achievement" and "making data-driven decisions with goals in mind," where you have to have that rich level of teaching every day.

Similar to principals, teachers from half of the focus groups conducted at "high-

Table 4.2 Principals' Perceptions of the Top Five Most Effective Methods for Parents Involvement

High Performing Charters		Other Charters	
Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as first or second most effective	Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as first or second most effective
1. Parent-teacher conferences	52.2%	1. Regular individualized teacher-parent communications	34.9%
2. Regular email communications to all parents	33.0%	2. Regular email communications to all parents	33.7%
3. Regular individualized teacher-parent communications	26.1%	3. Parent-teacher conferences	30.8%
4. Regular school day events for parents to interact with their children	21.7%	4. System for parents to monitor attendance, grades, and assignments	27.2%
5. Parent volunteer opportunities	21.7%	5. Parent volunteer opportunities	15.4%

Source: Spring 2018 Charter School Campus Principal Survey.

Overall, principals at high-performing charter schools seemed to place a higher priority on the mission and educational philosophy of their campus and are more likely to have master's degrees than the principals at other charter school campuses. Principals at high-performing charter schools also place a higher priority on the importance of parent-teacher and parent-student interaction compared to principals at other charter school campuses.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategies

The ability to recruit and retain high-quality teachers is central to the success of charter schools. The evaluation examined several different issues related to recruiting and retaining high-quality educators. Included in this section of analysis are the following areas: effective methods for attracting high-quality educators, criteria for hiring teachers, criteria for retaining teachers, and effective methods for retaining teachers.

Methods for Attracting High-Quality Teachers

When starting a new campus, expanding a campus, or replacing teachers due to attrition, attracting instructional talent to campuses is critical. Charter school principals were asked to rank the most effective recruitment efforts to attract high-quality teachers to their campuses. As Table 4.2 shows, principals in both groups of charter school campuses ranked "Current teachers recruiting colleagues" as the most important method for recruiting high-quality teachers. Fifty-five percent of principals at high-performing charters and 53% of principals at other charter campuses rated these teacher referrals as the first or second most effective teacher recruitment strategy. This finding was further solidified through spring 2018 interviews with high-performing principals who noted this strategy as effective for attracting high-quality teachers. The majority of principals interviewed (80%) mentioned that "word-of-mouth is really important," and that their best teachers are "people we got through some kind of networking."

Other methods rated as most effective by principals at high-performing charter school campuses included online advertisements (35%), word-of-mouth about the school (35%), job fairs (20%), and CMO or district offices (20%). Principals at high-performing charter school campuses were more inclined to rank online advertisements as one of the two most effective methods for attracting high-quality teachers (35%) compared to 13% of principals at other charter campuses (Table 4.3).

Table 4.4 Principals' Perception

Table 4.5 Principals' Perspectives on the Five Most Heavily Weighted Criteria When Deciding to Retain a Teacher

High-Performing Charters		Other Charters	
Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as carrying first or second most weight	Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as carrying first or second most weight
1. Instructional effectiveness	61.9%	1. Instructional effectiveness	67.4%
2. Classroom management	38.1%	2. Student performance	38.4%
3. Student engagement	33.3%	3. Classroom management	30.8%
4. Student performance	33.3%	4. Cultural fit with campus	25.0%
5. Cultural fit with campus	14.3%	5. Student engagement	23.8%

Source: Spring 2018 Charter School Campus Principal Survey.
Note: Results based on 21 responses from principals at high-performing charter school campuses and 172 principals at other charter school campuses.

Effective Methods for Retaining Teachers

As Table 4.6 shows, when principals were asked about the most effective methods for retaining high quality teachers, "Smaller class sizes" and "Regular feedback on instructional practice" were consistently the top two most effective methods cited by charter school principals. However, some differences in prioritizations between principals at high-performing and other charter school campuses

Table 4.7 Principals' Perceptions of Five Most Effective Methods for Student Recruitment

High Performing Charters		Other Charters	
Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as first or second most effective	Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as first or second most effective
1. Word-of-mouth from			

activities as one of the two most effective approaches for retaining students at their schools compared to just 6% of principals at other charter school campuses.

Table 4.8 Principals' Perceptions of Five Most Effective Methods for Retaining Students

High-Performing Charters		Other Charters	
Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as first or second most effective	Response Item	Percentage of principals who rated item as first or second most effective
1. Student-centered instruction	40.0%	1. Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students	41.2%
2. Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students	35.0%	2. Establishment of a safe and collaborative environment at the campus	26.1%
3. Establishment of a safe and collaborative environment at the campus	25.0%	3. Demonstrated academic growth of students	24.8%
4. Use of multiple instructional approaches to meet academic needs	25.0%	4. Effective communication between teachers and parents	20.0%
5. Demonstrated academic growth of students	15.0%	5. Student-centered instruction	15.8%

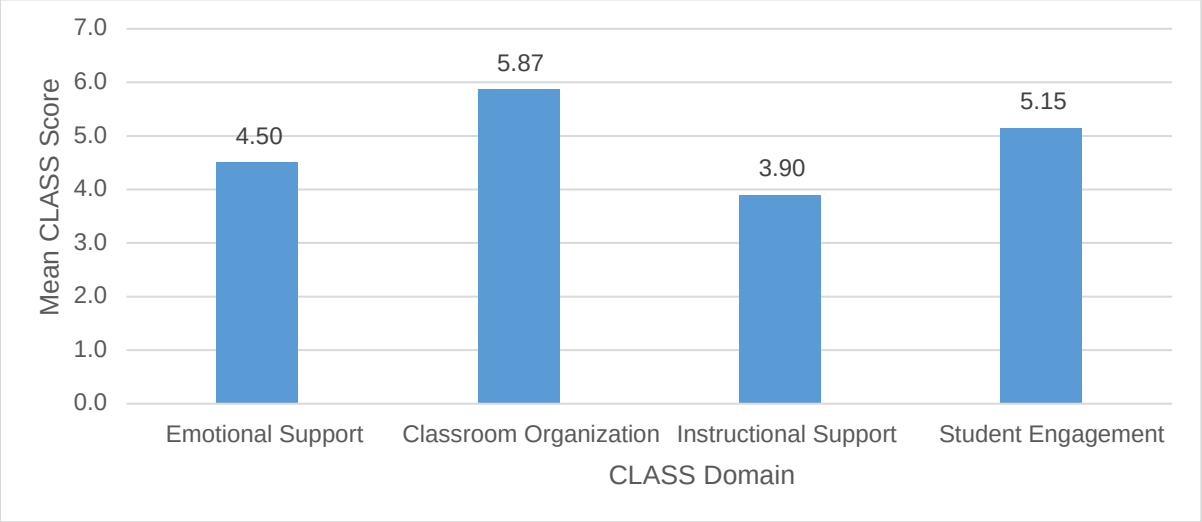
Source: Spring 2018 Charter School Campus Principal Survey.
Note: Results based on 20 responses from principals at high-performing charter school campuses and 165 principals at other charter school campuses.

Instructional Practices

After establishing effective organizational practices and methods for recruiting and retaining high-quality educators, providing the support necessary for new and veteran teachers to be successful is essential for charter school campuses to deliver the highest quality of instruction possible to students. This study examined the following aspects of instructional practices at high-performing charter schools: frequently observed instructional practices, impactful instructional practices observed, impactful

The evaluation also observed and s3960202020.001 Tw oer6e-0.00er

Figure 4.3 CLASS Observation Scores for Teachers at High-Performing Charter Schools



Source: CLASS Observation Scores, fall 2017 and spring 2018, Texas Education Agency, 2018.
Note: Results based on 39 observations of teachers at high-performing charter schools in spring 2018.

Closing the Achievement Gap for Educationally Disadvantaged Students

Educationally disadvantaged students are defined in this evaluation as students identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. As Table 4.12 shows, strong teacher-student relationships and connections and various forms of in-class academic interventions (i.e., small group instruction, differentiated instruction) and out-of-class academic interventions (i.e., targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist) are ranked as some of the most impactful approaches to closing achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students. However, only principals at high-performing charter school campuses ranked special education services as one of the most impactful.

Almost 23% of principals at high-performing charter school campuses ranked special education services as one of the top two most impactful approaches for closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students. This compared to just 3% of other charter school principals. While differences

Table 4.12

performing charter school campuses were also more likely to strongly agree (57%) that there is a culture of professionalism at their school than their counterparts at other charter schools (39%). (Figure 4.4)

Figure 4.4

[redacted]

[redacted]

- High-performing charter schools placed greater emphasis on instructional strategies as a key contributor to improving student learning experiences and subsequent student persistence at the charter school campus.

- When asked about effective student retention strategies, principals at high-performing charter schools ranked student-centered instruction and the use of multiple instructional approaches to meet academic needs higher than their peers at other charter school campuses. These approaches can be considered as best or promising practices that can be emulated by other schools.

Instructional Practices

Effective Instructional Practices

While organizational practices are critical to ensuring that charters are running like "well-oiled machines", the quality of instruction ultimately drives performance and student outcomes.

Closing the Achievement Gap for Educationally Disadvantages and Persistently Low-Performing Students

Across all charter school principals, establishing strong teacher-student relationships and connections and various forms of in-class (i.e., small group instruction, differentiated instruction, individualized instruction) and out-of-class academic interventions (i.e., targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist) are ranked as some of the most impactful approaches to closing achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students. The following practices for closing achievement gaps have emerged as being more prominent at high-performing charter schools than other charters across the state

- The use of special education;
- Differentiated instruction in class;
- Individualized instruction in class; and
- Communications with parents about their student's performance.

School Climate and Staff Morale

Campus Climate and Staff Morale

As evidenced by survey responses

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following differentiating approaches were evident through principal survey data at high-performing charter schools:

- The use of proactive steps to curb misbehavior in the classroom (which is further supported by effective classroom organization and management skills demonstrated during classroom observations). This includes the consistent use of student redirection techniques and the setting of clear student behavior expectations.
- Strong anti-bullying policies

Word-of-mouth advertising through parents, social media, and principal presentations at local events were ranked by principals as the most effective methods for recruiting students to their new charter school campuses. Just over three-quarters (77%) of students enrolled at charter school start-up campuses in 2016–17 returned to those campuses for the 2017–18 school year. Of the students who transferred, 53% attended traditional public schools, 29% attended different charter schools in 2017–18, and 18% left the school system.

Charter School Start-Up Grantee Outcomes

The evaluation estimated effects of enrollment in a charter school start-up grantee campus on the following student outcomes: STAAR Reading, STAAR Mathematics, Algebra I EOC exams, and English I EOC exams.

At the elementary and middle school levels, there were individual charter school start-up grantee campuses that showed statistically significant differences, some positive and some negative, in STAAR Mathematics and STAAR Reading test results compared to matched students enrolled in traditional public schools, after controlling for student differences. However, there were no significant overall differences on average for STAAR Mathematics or STAAR Reading test results for the four charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses or the six charter school start-up grantee middle school campuses in the analyses and matched traditional school campuses. For Algebra I and English I EOC exams for students enrolled in the charter school start-up grantee high school campus, after controlling for differences in student and school characteristics, students enrolled in the campus showed significantly higher Algebra I and English I EOC exam scores compared with matched students enrolled in traditional public schools.

Of the four charter school start-up grantee elementary campuses, three of the campuses had a lower percentage of students ready for Kindergarten and higher rates of eligibility for accelerated reading instruction compared to students in feeder districts.

When comparing the overall performance of start-up grantee campuses to the performance of students in different student groups, in most cases the results for each student group were very similar to the overall results when looking at all students, with two exceptions. The overall story is that in most cases the STAAR results for each student group are very similar to the overall results, with overall effects generally small and insignificant, and with the estimated effects for specific student groups generally very similar to the overall effects. Across the different student groups and grade ranges, there are a couple of cases where the results are not as similar for a particular outcome and student group, caused by instances where one or more campuses have substantially different estimated effects for a particular outcome and student group than the overall estimated effect for those campuses. This amount of variation by student group is expected, and indicates that the overall results are not in part driven by particular student groups.

Organizational Practices

- Clarity in the educational philosophy and mission of the charter schools were rated by principals at high-performing charter school campuses as the most important practice to executing the campus' mission, and high-performing charter school principals were more likely to rate this as an important item than principals at other charter school campuses.

- The creation of a youth culture at the campus, which can impact student satisfaction with their educational experience, academic performance, and student retention at the school was also an emerging practice at high-performing charter schools.

- Getting parents connected to the school and involved in their child's education is an important organizational activity for charter schools. It requires a great deal of intentionality, focus, organization, and creativity. Principals at high-performing charter schools placed more emphasis on the use of open houses and regular school day events for parents to interact with their children to increase parent engagement than their counterparts at other charter school campuses.

- Principals at high-performing charter schools were also more likely to encourage parents to attend parent meetings, conferences, open houses, and other campus events, and to participate in school fundraising events. These practices can be considered promising practices to engage parents in their child's education and connect them to the charter school.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

- Principals at all charter schools (high-performing and other) ranked the use of current teachers to recruit colleagues as the most important method for recruiting high-quality teachers, while high-performing charter school principals were more likely to rank online advertisements as one of the two most effective recruitment methods.

- Similar to start-up campus principals, instructor effectiveness was ranked as the first or second most important criteria when considering teacher retention. None of the high-performing charter school principals considered incentive pay to be one of their top two methods for recruiting teachers. Importantly, principals at high-performing charter schools were more inclined to consider a teacher's educational fit with the school's educational philosophy and mission when hiring new educators at their campuses.

- For both high-performing and other charter schools, instructional effectiveness, classroom management, student engagement, student performance, and cultural fit with the campuses were deemed by principals to be most important when deciding whether or not to retain a teacher.

- Regarding the most effective methods for retaining high-quality teachers, principals across all charter school campuses consistently ranked smaller class sizes and providing regular feedback to the teacher regarding instructional practices as the top two most effective approaches. Principals at high-performing charter schools placed more emphasis on providing teachers with

smaller class sizes and professional learning communities to support teacher retention and reduce the risk of burnout.

- Principals at high-performing charter schools did not rank teacher incentive pay as an effective tool for retaining high-quality teachers.

Student Recruitment and Retention

- For all charter school principals, word-of-mouth advertising from parents of students currently enrolled was ranked as the most effective recruitment tool. However, the use of open houses and the educational philosophy of the school was more commonly ranked as an effective practice by principti ilh7' D v | "`` À m x

- Instructional practices observed at high-performing charter schools reflect high-quality teacher-student interactions related to effective instructional supports and classroom management approaches

Campus Climate and Staff Morale

- Principals at high-performing schools were much more inclined to “strongly agree” that staff morale is high at their campus, teachers trust their principal, and that teachers trust each other than their counterparts at other charter schools. In addition, a larger proportion of principals at high-performing charter school campuses were in strong agreement that their campus has an inclusive work environment that high-value is placed on teamwork and collaboration, and that there is a culture of professionalism at their school.

- Principals at all charter schools consistently chose the following important approaches to [illegible] sharing a common set of beliefs about

References

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Appendix A: Overview of Evaluation Approach and Data Collection Methods

This appendix includes additional detail related to data collection and analysis approaches used in the evaluation of the Texas Public Charter School Program (TxCSP) Grant.

Statewide Survey of Charter School Principals

To learn about what principals at high-performing charter schools felt were the most impactful, effective, and important methods for various school functions (e.g., organizational practices, instructional practices, teacher recruitment and retention, student recruitment and retention, and maintaining school morale), the evaluation administered a survey to all principals in Texas. This allowed for the comparison of responses by principals at high-performing charter schools and principals at other charter schools.

Identifying High-Performing Campuses from Student Impact

TEA designated 184 charter campuses as "high-quality" in 2017. Using the initial population of 184 campuses, 100 "high-quality" charter campuses were selected for analysis using stratified random sampling. To conduct this analysis, TEA data sources were used to 1) conduct propensity score matching to identify a comparison group for each high-quality charter school campus and 2) estimate impact models to measure the extent to which campuses improved student outcomes.[29]

More specifically, the evaluation used de-identified, longitudinally-linked student data from TEA. The variables included:

- STAAR Reading and Mathematics exam scores for Grades 3 through 8, the primary outcome, a key matching variable, and a baseline covariate;
- STAAR end-of-course (EOC) exam scores, a primary outcome for high school grades;
- Early reading indicators and school readiness (for kindergarten) indicators, representing potential baseline covariates and matching variables for early elementary school grades; and
- Demographic characteristics used for matching and as baseline covariates.

The impact model the evaluation used was a matched comparison group quasi-experimental design (QED) for the subsample of 100 "high-quality" charter campuses.[30] Moreover, high-performing campuses in this model were identified using three-year impacts calculated with TEA data for the 2013-2014 school year (to capture baseline data) through the 2016-2017 school year.

Finally, to make this analysis of state test scores comparable across grades and years, all raw test scores were converted to z-scores defined relative to the statewide distribution of scores in each grade, year, and subject.

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[29] Of the 184 initial campuses, all 63 campuses that comprise Charter Schools with four or fewer campuses are included. For the nine charter LEAs with five or more campuses, stratified random sampling was used to select a

- 14 surveys were completed by principals at campuses which received funding through the Texas Charter School Start-Up Grant Program (45% response rate)
- 23 surveys were completed by principals at high-

students) and charter school type (i.e., open enrollment, 91(n)t

baseline STAAR test scores. In these cases, students in Grades 4 and 5 were included using the students' Grade 3 STAAR scores as a "baseline" test score for matching.

The propensity model was used to estimate propensity scores for each treatment and comparison student in the sample for every "high-quality" charter school campus evaluated. With these propensity scores determined for each student, comparison group students were matched to similar treatment group students.

Propensity score matching was done using a variant of the PSM approach employed in Tuttle et al., 2013 and Tuttle et al., 2015, which relies on observed demographic characteristics and baseline achievement to select a well-matched comparison group for charter students at each high-quality charter school campus. The treatment group consists of any student entering one of the sample Texas charter school campuses during the 2014-15, 2015-16, or 2016-17 school years. The comparison group is selected by considering all students across districts identified as feeder districts to that charter school, where feeder districts are defined as those including at least one-fifth of treatment campus identified as the campus of residence for at least five students in that charter school, in the same grade and year as potential comparison students, while retaining in the actual comparison group only those students whose characteristics and achievement during the baseline period match those of treatment group students. S6(n3.1(n)2.d)13.2(h)2.3(t)-3(h)d ap2.3(s)-1.3(u)2.2(pah)2.3(t)-3(h)h anasar l as

The study tested the balance of the treatment group and the matched comparison group by conducting a test of the significance of differences between the two groups in their baseline test scores and other demographic variables (race/ethnicity, gender, special education status, FRL status, and limited English proficiency status). For the matched comparison group sample associated with each treatment school, the study required the baseline test scores of treatment students and comparison students to be balanced in both STAAR mathematics and reading. The study also required there to be no more than one significant difference on any of the other demographic characteristics listed above. The study considers a covariate to be balanced when the means of this covariate for the comparison group are not significantly different from the treatment group at the 5% level. If the first round of matching did not identify a comparison group meeting these criteria, the propensity score estimation model for that school was adjusted, a new set of propensity scores was reestimated, a new matched comparison group was obtained, and the balance between the treatment group and the new matched comparison group was tested. These steps were iterated until the matched comparison group achieved balance with the treatment group according to the study's criteria.

The combination of propensity score matching and regression analysis accounts for differences in observed baseline characteristics and achievement scores between treatment students and comparison students (in other words, the differences associated with initial selection into charter schools). But it remains possible that treatment students and comparison students differ in unobserved ways that may affect later test scores. However, previous studies have suggested that applying a combination of propensity score matching and regression analysis, as done here, can succeed in replicating experimental impact estimates in certain contexts (Cook et al. 2008; Bifulco 2012; Fuguet 2012; Tuttle et al. 2013; Fortson et al. 2015). This analytic approach for the propensity score matching model was implemented in Mathematica's analysis of impacts of KIPP charter schools (Tuttle et al. 2013 and 2015). As part of those reports, a variety of sensitivity tests were run to check the robustness of the model to alternatives to the main specifications, and the impacts were not sensitive to any of the changes in specification.

Measuring the Impact of These High-Performing Campuses

Under this QED, charter campus students were compared with their matched comparison group—students with similar baseline characteristics attending traditional public schools in nearby districts. This approach was used to estimate an impact model that regresses STAAR outcomes on a treatment indicator for whether or not a student attended a charter campus.

This model estimates the impact of charter school campuses on student STAAR outcomes using average differences between student treatment and comparison groups, producing estimates of impact for each charter school campus. To improve the precision of these estimates, baseline student characteristics were adjusted for in the regression model.

As with the PSM procedure, the baseline test score model covariates are the STAAR Mathematics and Reading scores from the year prior to charter entry. For students in Grades 4 or 5 who entered the charter school campus in Grade 3 or prior, the student's Grade 3 STAAR scores were used as baseline test scores for matching. The baseline test scores for these students occur after they enter the charter school campus; therefore, the estimated impact for these students omits the effect the charter campus had on their performance prior to the baseline test.

teachers who left start-up grantee campuses to those who remained, as well as an examination of where teachers who left both grantee campuses and campuses in feeder districts. The analysis examined the percent of teachers from each group who transitioned to different roles in their same campus, left to teach at a different campus, or left the teacher data altogether.

Analysis of Student Characteristics and Mobility Rates

In order to examine the characteristics of students who entered and exited start-up grantee campuses, the study first restricted the sample to students attending grantee campuses in 2016–17 for at least two hours per day. It then compared the characteristics of students who remained at a grantee campus for the entire school year to those who exited th

Appendix B: Technical Appendix – Impact Analysis Methodology

Estimating impacts on achievement and other outcomes

The analysis of impacts for start-up grantee campuses uses a similar matched comparison group quasi-experimental design model as was used to estimate impacts for identifying high-quality charter campuses, as described in Appendix A. This model allows the impact estimates to vary across campuses, creating a separate impact estimate for each grantee campus. In other words, this model estimates an OLS regression model including all campuses in a grade range, with separate impact estimates for each

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Appendix C: CLASS Observation Protocol

- ***Regard for Student Perspectives***: The degree to which teachers' interactions with students and classroom activities place an emphasis on students' interests, motivations, and points of view.

Classroom Organization Domain (CLASS Dimensions are the same for all 3 protocols)

- ***Behavioral Management***: How effectively teachers monitor, prevent, and redirect behavior.

- ***Productivity***: How well the classroom runs with respect to routines and the degree to which teachers organize activities and directions so that maximum time can be spent in learning activities.

- ***Instructional Learning Formats***: How teachers facilitate activities and provide interesting materials so that students are engaged and learning opportunities are maximized.

Instructional Support Domain (Dimensions differ by protocol)

- ***Concept Development (This Dimension is used for all 3 protocols)***: How teachers use instructional discussions and activities to promote students' higher-order thinking skills in contrast to a focus on rote instruction.

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- The CLASS tool provides a common lens for observers to provide consistent and reliable ratings across a wide range of classroom interactions directly related to student learning.

- CLASS dimensions are grounded in developmental theory and research.

- CLASS observation tools are nationally recognized and supported by rigorous training for observers by Teachstone CLASS content experts certified through a Train-the-Trainer model. All CLASS observers must be certified as "reliable" through rigorous online testing before they can utilize the protocol in classrooms.

- Each teacher will receive three class scores for each dimension based on 15-20 minute observation periods. Multiple scores will improve the reliability of the teacher-level scores.

- The use of the CLASS instrument is a cost-effective approach for the Public Charter School Start Up Grant evaluation.

How CLASS Data was used in the Evaluation

All observed classrooms received scores from 1 to 7 for each of the 10 CLASS dimensions. Each classroom received three scores, based on 15-20 minute observation periods for each dimension, which were compiled to create an average score per dimension. Dimension scores were aggregated to the domain level to create classroom scores for each related domain (e.g., Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, Instructional Support, and Student Engagement (for grades 1-2)). CLASS observation scores are based on detailed notes taken by researchers during the period of observation (Pianta, La Paro & Hamre, 2015).

Appendix D: Principal Survey Instrument

- % adding up to 100

14. What are the key tenets of your charter school campus's mission?
--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

15. What organizational practices have you found to be most important in helping your campus run effectively?
--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Instructional Practices

16. Of the following instructional practices, which 5 did you observe most frequently at your charter school campus during 2017-18? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most frequent and 5 is fifth most frequent.)
___ Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student
___ Teacher support for student autonomy and leadership
___ Maximizing learning time
___ Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction
___ Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan
___ Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of modalities
___ Meaningful peer interactions
___ Active facilitation of higher-order thinking by students
___ Cumulative content-driven exchanges between teacher and students
___ Allowing teachers flexibility in the use of curriculum and related lesson planning
___ Effective scaffolding by teacher
___ Effective use of technology in the classroom
___ Other (Please specify.)

17. Of the following instructional practices that you have observed from your teachers during the 2017-18 school year, which 5 were most impactful? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most impactful and 5 is the fifth most impactful.)
____ Establishing positive relationships between the teacher and student
____ Teacher support for student autonomy and leadership
____ Maximizing learning time
____ Use of formative data in student assessments to guide instruction
____ Establishment of clear learning targets for each lesson plan
____ Use of hands-on activities in class with a variety of instructional strategies
____ Meaningful peer interactions
____ Active teacher facilitation of higher-order thinking by students
____ Cumulative content-driven exchanges between teacher and students across lessons and units
____ Effective scaffolding by teacher
____ Allowing teachers flexibility in the use of curriculum and related lesson planning
____ Effective use of technology in the classroom
____ Other (Please specify.)

____ Other (Please specify.)

18. Of the following teacher supports, which 5 have you found to be most impactful in improving instructional practices at your charter school campus during the 2016-2017 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5 where 1 is most impactful and 5 is fifth most impactful.)

___ Providing feedback to teachers based on walk-throughs or informal observations
___ Providing feedback to teachers based on formal, scheduled observations
___ Use of research-based rubrics
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___Online learning tools for math and/or ELA
___Collaboration between teachers
___Other (Please specify.)
___Other (Please specify.)

21. Describe the methods you have found to be most effective in closing achievement gaps for educationally disadvantaged students (identified as being at risk of dropping out of school) at your charter school campus during the 2017-18 school year.

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Working with Low-Performing Students

22. Of the following instructional practices, which 5 have you found to be most impactful in closing the achievement gap for low-performing students (identified as being in the bottom 10% in math or reading) at your charter school campus during the 2017-18 school year? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most impactful and 5 is the fifth most impactful.)

___Communications with parents regarding student performance
___Small-group instruction in class
___Individualized instruction in class
___Differentiated in-class instruction
___Flexible grouping strategies in class
___Strategies to improve student attendance
___Targeted pull-out instruction by interventionist
___In-school instructional or tutoring labs
___Online learning tools for math and/or ELA
___Before or after school tutoring or enrichment programs
___Summer school or summer instructional sessions
___Collaboration between teachers
___A unique use of technology to address student needs
___Other (Please specify.)
___Other (Please specify.)

23. During the 2017-18 school year, please indicate if students are assigned or tracked into any of the following classes (e.g., below grade-level, on-grade, above grade) based upon their CURRENT LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT (e.g., test scores, prior grade performance) as opposed to by age alone.

Reading/English Language Arts (Y/N)
Mathematics (Y/N)
Science (Y/N)
Social Studies (Y/N)

24. Describe one approach you have found particularly effective in closing achievement gaps for low-performing students at your charter school campus during the 2017-18 school year. Why do you believe it worked exceptionally well?

--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Student Discipline

28. Did your campus encourage students to sign a code of conduct, handbook,(f)(o)-9391p2gt,6.3(o)-9.6

32. (Ask Only if Respondent DID NOT

37. For teachers who were not renewed between 2016-17 and 2017-

39. Of the following approaches, which 5 have been most effective to successfully retain high quality teachers? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective).

___ Classroom assistance (e.g., educational aides)
___ Flexibility in lesson planning
___ Technology in the classroom
___ Effective curriculum and supplemental materials
___ Smaller class sizes
___ Nonperformance-based differentiated pay for teachers
___ Incentive pay based on stud(a)-3.1d(a)-3.1Tc 0.0 0791 -1.315 Td [03 Tw 7.25 0 Td [(b)2.2(a201)-4
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43. What methods were most effective in recruiting students for the 2017-18 school year?
--- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

44. (Only for campuses serving students in 2016-17 and 2017-18) Considering retention between the 2016-17 and 2017-18 school years, of the following approaches for retaining students at your campus, which 5 have you found to be most effective? (Rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is most effective and 5 is the fifth most effective)
    ___ Effective communications between the campus leadership and parents
    ___ Effective communications between teachers and parents
    ___ Student-centered instruction
    ___ Building meaningful relationships between teachers and students
    ___ Demonstrated academic growth of students
    ___ Rigorous curriculum
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47. Consider the 2017–18 school year culture and climate at your campus. From the following list of indicators of positive school climate, which 5 are the most important for your campus? (Please rank from 1 to 5, where 1 is the most important aspect to maintain a positive school climate and 5 is the fifth most important.)
    ____Campus staff share a common set of beliefs about schooling/learning
    ____Mutual respect for colleagues' ideas
    ____Culture of shared success
    ____Opportunities for teachers to collaborate
    ____Development of a family atmosphere
    ____Academic growth of students
    ____Socio-emotional growth of students
    ____Genuine care for students
    ____Adequate planning time to develop lesson plans
    ____Culture of respect between students and teachers
    ____Culture of respect among students (e.g., anti-bullying culture)
    ____Flexibility in lesson design and delivery
    ____Other (Please describe.)
    ____Other (Please describe.)

48. What effective approaches have you used at your campus to create a positive climate in 2017–18?
    --- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

Final Thoughts

49. What are the three most important things that have made your charter school campus effective in 2017–18?
    --- OPEN ENDED RESPONSE

c. If no, are you planning to establish PLCs at your school?

16. Does your school use instructional rounds?
    a. If yes, how often do teachers participate in instructional rounds?
    b. If yes, how are instructional rounds a benefit to your campus?
    c. If no, are you planning to implement instructional rounds at your school? If so, when?
17. Do your teachers have access to formal coaching support?
18. (Cohort 1) To what extent do you tailor professional development (PD) to the individualized needs of the teacher? Please describe your process for making this happen.
    (Cohort 2) To what extent will you tailor professional development (PD) to the individualized needs of the teacher? Please describe your process for making this happen.

Global Question Related to Student Challenges

19. What are the biggest challenges that face students enrolled at your school?

Educationally disadvantaged students

20. What services does your charter school offer to support students who are educationally disadvantaged (i.e., considered at risk of dropping out of school)?
21. (Cohort 1 only) What methods have you found to be most effective in closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at this charter school?
22. (Cohort 2 only) What methods do you anticipate having the greatest impact on closing the achievement gap for educationally disadvantaged students at this charter school?

Lowest-performing students

23. What data are used to determine which students are the lowest-performing and may need additional supports?
24. In what ways does your school support the lowest-performing students?
25. How do you monitor the progress of lowest-performing students?
26. (Cohort 1 only) What methods have you found to be most effective in closing the achievement gap for low-performing students?
27. (Cohort 2 only) What methods do you anticipate having the greatest impact on closing the achievement gap for low-performing students?

Student discipline (5 minutes)

28. Does your charter school encourage students and/or parents to sign a contract with the school?
    a. What are the major tenets of these contracts?
    b. What occurs when a student or parent fails to meet the terms of the contract?
29. (Cohort 1 only) What approaches have been most effective at reducing student behavioral issues at your school?
30. (Cohort 2 only) What approaches do you anticipate will have the biggest impact on reducing student behavioral issues at your school?

Student recruitment/retention

31. What is your target population for student recruitment? What methods of student recruitment have you found to be most effective?
32. How do parents and/or students learn about your school? What methods do you use to disseminate information about your school?
33.

(Cohort 2 only) What rewards or bonuses, if any, will be available to high-performing teachers and other staff?

47. What methods do you use to retain highly qualified teachers at your charter school?
48. (Cohort 1 only) What methods have been most effective in retaining highly qualified educators at your charter school?
49. (Cohort 2 only) What methods do you anticipate having the biggest impact on teacher retention at your charter school?

School climate

50. How would you characterize the school climate and teaching conditions at your school? Why do you feel that way?
51.

Texas Public Charter School Program Start-Up Grant Evaluation
Teacher Focus Group Questions – Start-Up Charter Schools

Introductions and Organization-level practices

1. Let's take a few minutes for introductions. Please tell me:
    a. Your name
    b. What grades and subjects you teach this year.

Note for interviewer: Remind participants to state their name before providing an answer (to provide clarity during transcription/analysis. If need be, reiterate elements of confidentiality statement)

2. (Ask each teacher to answer this question; follow-up on any questions the teacher does not answer) Please describe what type of school you worked at before this (e.g., local ISD, another charter, working in industry, etc.), how you were recruited into your position at this school, and what interested you about this school or position?

Note for interviewer: Remind participants that they are now free to jump in and add to the

b. [Cohort 1 only] What are the consequences (if any) for teachers who are not meeting expectations?
c. [Cohort 2 only] What will be the consequences (if any) for teachers who are not meeting expectations?
d. [Cohort 1 only] What steps are involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?
   [Cohort 2 only] What steps will be involved in bringing a teacher's performance up to expectations?

Generic Question Related to Challenges with Student Population

11. What are the biggest challenges that face students enrolled at your school?

Educationally disadvantaged and low-performing students

12. How do you tailor your instruction to support educationally disadvantaged (i.e., students who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school) or your lowest-performing students?
13. What do you do differently for these low-performing students (i.e., students in the bottom 10% in reading and math) to improve their academic results?

Student discipline

14. Please describe your general approach to managing student behaviors in your classroom.
15. Which classroom management approaches have been most effective?
16. In what ways do school leaders support you with disciplinary issues?

Closing Question(s)

23. What advice would you like to receive, or do you wish you had received about best practices with regard to:
    a. Lesson planning?
    b. Instructional quality?
    c. Recruiting and retaining students?

Texas Public Charter School Program Start-up Grant Evaluation
Teacher Focus Group Questions – High-performing charter schools

Introductions and Organization-level practices

1.

Table F2

Table F.3 shows a descriptive look at data on early reading indicators and Kindergarten readiness indicators for the four start-up grantee campuses with elementary grades. Because no baseline data is available for students on these outcomes, a regression-based impact analysis is not feasible

Table F.3 Kindergarten Readiness and Early Reading Indicators for Charter School Start-up Grantee Campuses, 2016–17

School Name	Kindergarten readiness	Number of students	Accelerated reading instruction eligibility	Number

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