

This report describes results from the Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) Staff Perceptions Survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide information for stakeholders to gain an understanding of the implementation and impact of the PPfT program following the third year after launch. Of particular interest were teachers' perceptions of the different program components of PPfT (e.g. student learning objectives [SLOs], the PPfT appraisal system, PPfT compensation). Stakeholders were also interested in whether or not teachers felt the appraisal rating system was fair and accurate, whether they understood how the various components of PPfT worked, and whether they understood how PPfT could potentially affect their salaries. The results in this report may provide guidance for program administrators on implementation and delivery, based on input from the population affected.

PPfT launched district-wide in Austin Independent School District (AISD), in the 2016–2017 school year to empower teachers and improve the quality of teaching through a multi-measure appraisal and compensation system. A secondary emphasis of the program was to help retain quality teachers and improve student outcomes. Each year since its inception, new components have been added. For example, offering professional learning opportunities to teachers is a new component. One of these opportunities is the option to participate in district initiatives (i.e., transformative technology, social -and -emotional learning, and literacy). Another new opportunity is the option to enroll in professional development units (PDUs), whereby teachers self-organize into collaborative research teams to answer an education -based research question and produce a report by the end of the school year.

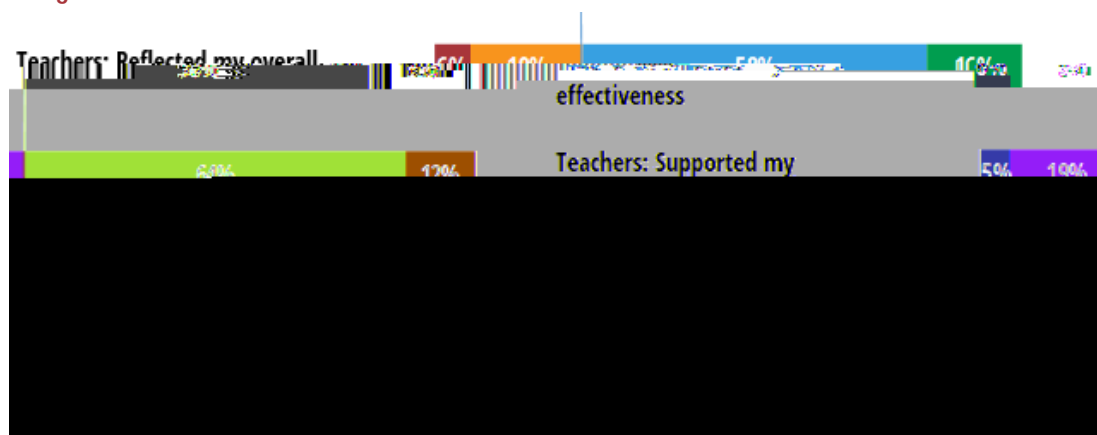
For the program implementation and outcomes to be continually monitored, the AISD Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) has provided evaluation and support. DRE support includes data collection, analysis, validation of appraisal methods, measurement of student outcomes, and education of stakeholders.

or agreed that the components of PPfT appraisal supported their professional growth and 79% believed the PPfT feedback they received drove their instruction and improved their

instructional practice. A slightly higher percentage (88%) of administrators strongly agreed or agreed on their campus (Figure 1). Teachers most frequently chose PPFT as what most contributed to their voice and choice (n = 696), their professional growth as a teacher leader (n = 930), and the quality of their teaching (n = 1,003). Other choices included: compensation, LPs, and PDUs.

Figure 1

Teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** their appraisal rating reflected their overall effectiveness, supported professional growth, and drove instruction/improved instructional practice. A higher percentage of administrators than of teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** the appraisal rating reflected overall effectiveness. Fewer teachers and administrators **disagreed** or **strongly disagreed**.



. PPFT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

How did teachers perceive the PPFT components?

Methodology

In December 2019 through early January 2020, the PPFT staff perceptions survey was sent to all teachers in AISD who were at least half time employees (n = 5,895). Because stakeholders were interested in feedback from staff who administered or scored the appraisals, the survey was also sent to 336 administrators.

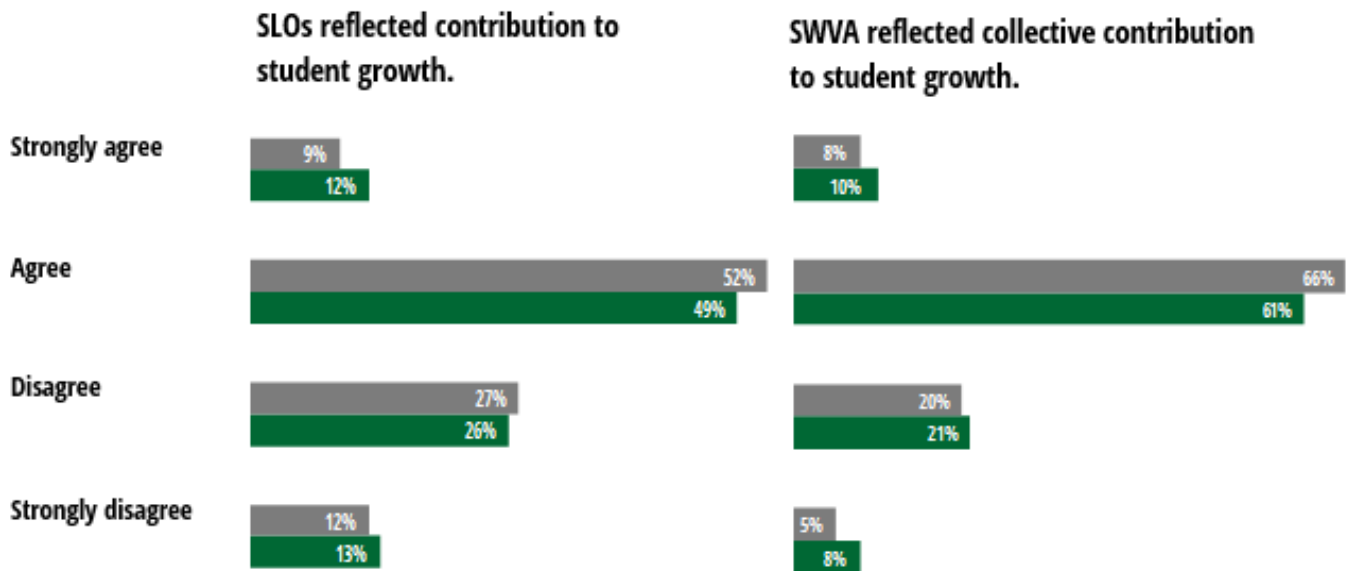
Forty-three percent of staff members responded to the survey (n = 2,511). Certain sections of the survey were relevant only to teachers who participated in that particular component of PPFT; therefore, the questions in those sections were only displayed to those teachers. Similarly, only questions pertaining to administrators were displayed to those staff members (see Figure 4 and 8).

Reports available on the DRE website (<https://www.austinisd.org/dre>) provide more background information about validation of DRE evaluation methods and about 2018–2019 PPFT results (see DeBaylo, Hutchins, Leung, Looby, & Minney, 2019; Hutchins, 2019).

Figure 2

Figure 4

Administrators and teachers reported similar perceptions of SLOs and SWVAs. More of both administrators and teachers (see Figure 3), strongly agreed or agreed that SWVAs reflected contributions to student growth than did SLOs.



Also noteworthy, in the block of questions about LPs and PDUs, there was a reversal of the trend for more respondents to answer “agree” than any other response. On all but one of the questions, teachers were more likely to answer “strongly agree” than any other response, indicating the participants in LPs were more likely to have strong, positive perceptions (Figure 6).

Figure 6

More teachers in LPs responded “strongly agree” than any other response choice, whereas fewer teachers in PDUs responded “strongly agree” than “agree.” This is a reversal of overall trend in other survey questions where most common response was “agree.”



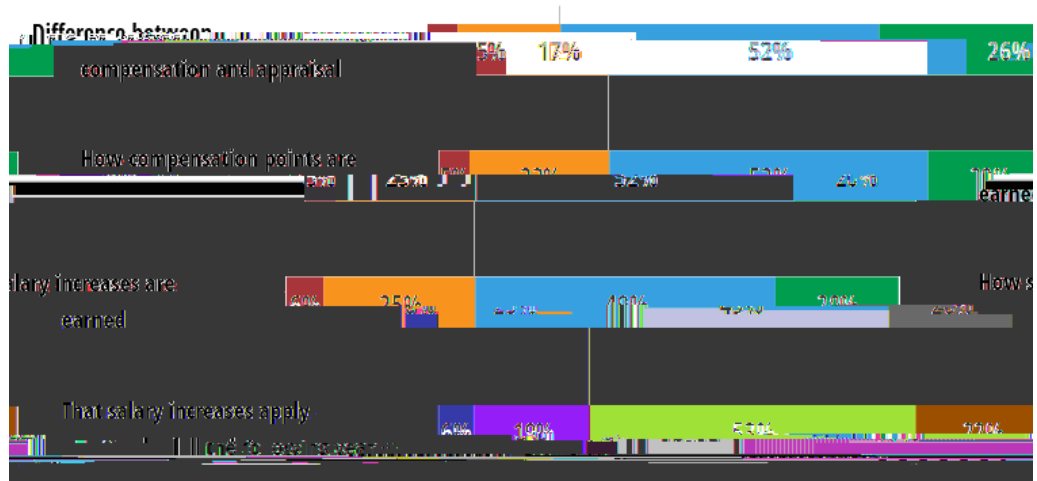
PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019.

How well do teachers and administrators understand how PPfT works?

High percentages of teachers reported they understood various components of PPfT. The majority (78%) reported they understood the difference between PPfT compensation and appraisal, how PPfT compensation points were earned (71%), how salary increases were earned (69%), and that salary increases are applied the following year (75%). Despite the high percentage of teachers who reported they understood the above aspects of PPfT compensation, 26%

Figure 7

The majority of teachers **strongly agreed** or **agreed** they understand the difference between PPfT compensation and appraisal, how compensation points are earned, and that salary increases are applied the following year. Fewer teachers **disagreed** or **strongly**

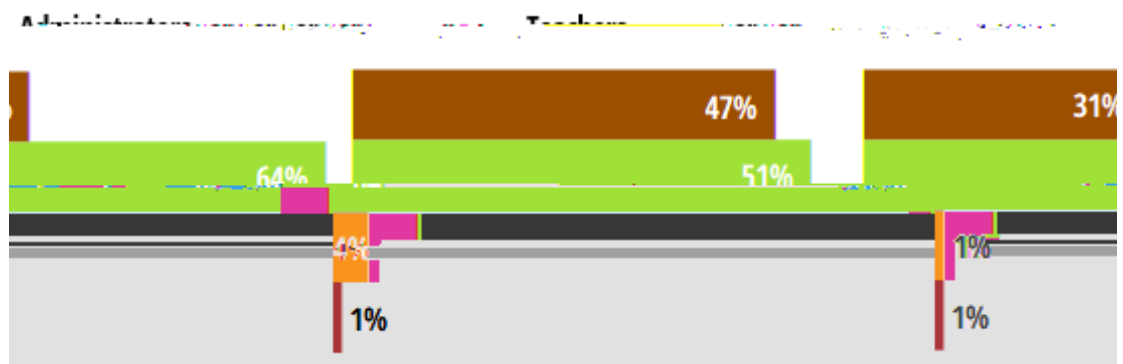


PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019

Responses from teachers and administrators on how well they understood the PPfT appraisal process were comparable. Ninety-six percent of teachers reported totally or moderately understanding the components of PPfT, and 95% reported totally or moderately understanding how the components factored into teachers' final ratings. More administrators than teachers reported they **totally** understood. Fewer teachers and administrators **slightly** or **didn't** understand.

Figure 8

The majority of teachers and administrators **totally** or **moderately** understood how the PPfT components factored into teachers' final ratings. More administrators than teachers reported they **totally** understood. Fewer teachers and administrators **slightly** or **didn't** understand.



PPfT Perceptions Survey data, fall 2019

Findings

The response rate from staff (43%) indicated the survey helped stakeholders reach their implementation goal of gathering formative evidence directly from participants in the program. These results provided actionable information to begin identifying initial outcomes and adjust program implementation if needed. In addition, future analysis of the qualitative data collected from respondents who answered unfavorably (i.e., disagree or strongly disagree) may reveal useful information.

Administrators and teachers responded to the survey using the PPfT rubric. It appears these respondents found the rating system to be fair. Administrators seemed to corroborate this finding in their responses regarding instructional practice. PPfT also seemed to contribute to teachers' feelings of empowerment and to improve the quality of their teaching, as it was designed to do. Most teachers reported PPfT appraisal was what most contributed to their voice and choice, their professional growth as a teacher leader, and the quality of their teaching.

Survey results indicated a lack of understanding by both teachers and staff about PPfT compensation. Therefore, future efforts should focus on explaining PPfT compensation to teachers. Further inquiry is necessary to determine what can be done to improve communication about PPfT compensation.

The majority of both teachers and administrators had positive responses about other aspects of PPfT. Teachers most frequently chose compensation as the reason they wanted to stay a teacher in AISD (with the exception of the response "none of these reasons"). This would seem to support the secondary goal of PPfT to retain quality teachers. The majority of teachers and administrators felt that student outcomes were positively affected by the PPfT appraisal system and LP and PDU components. This also addresses the secondary goal of PPfT (i.e., improve student outcomes).

Recommendations

Although the 43% response rate was a substantial portion of teachers and administrators, the responses only represented a portion of staff members affected by the PPfT program. For this reason, future efforts may be made to increase the response rate. Because almost 100% of teachers who participated in LPs responded to the survey, it could be a goal for future surveys to reach a response rate of less than half the population (47%). In short, the perceptions of the administrators and teachers are a crucial part of the implementation process, and therefore continuous efforts will be made to collect, analyze, and report on these valuable perceptions.

