



TEACHER
EFFECTIVENESS
INITIATIVE

TEI Overview



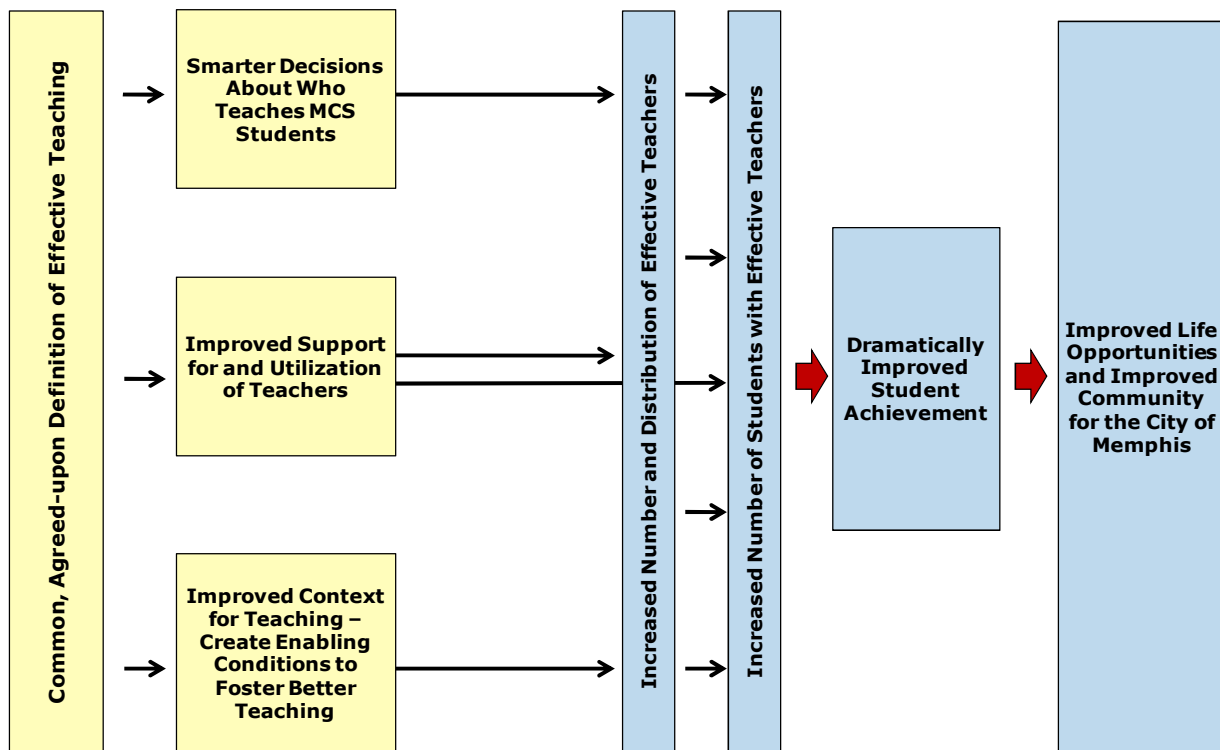
TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS INITIATIVE: AN OVERVIEW

VISION OF SUCCESS

The Memphis City Schools Teacher Effectiveness Initiative (TEI) will deepen and accelerate our existing aggressive reform agenda. It will provide the additional fuel necessary to drive dramatically improved student achievement. While many poor and minority youth achieve at the very highest academic levels, the achievement gap—and its impact—is real. This gap (currently narrowing much too slowly) must be closed. Of course, this achievement gap is a matter of access and experience—not ability. We envision every child being taught by an effective teacher every day, every year. With such access to high quality learning experiences, our students’ lives will be changed, and our city will be transformed.

To realize this vision, our overall strategy must be implemented as seamlessly as the following causal model implies:

MCS TEI Vision and Theory of Change



DISTRICT BASELINE

The conditions at present in Memphis City Schools (MCS) offer a unique combination of need, opportunity, and momentum. Our students (of whom 92% are minority and 83% are eligible for

free and reduced-priced meals) require a quantum leap in academic achievement: only 6% of MCS students who elect to take the ACT (i.e. 3-4% of total students) are deemed “college-ready” in all four subject areas. There is new, determined energy to change this, and there is clearly momentum. After one year of new district leadership, accelerated reforms have laid the groundwork for a laser-like focus on teacher effectiveness. Additionally, MCS is well-positioned to tackle this difficult work due to a productive and collaborative relationship with the Memphis Education Association and a Board of Commissioners that is deeply engaged in the policy work needed to sustain education reform. Finally, MCS is in a position of strength due to experience with value-added measures (i.e. TVAAS; Mathematica) and successful implementation of an incentive pay plan.

While MCS has seen some tremendous successes over the past year, there is clearly much work to be done—especially in regards to how we think about our teachers. As The New Teacher Project’s recent report suggests, we (like many districts) largely treat our teachers as “widgets.” We operate as if one teacher is as good for students as another. This is evidenced in and driven by our lack of a common definition of “effective teaching.” We lack an informative teacher evaluation process, and we pass by many potentially crucial human capital decisions. We fail to recognize and reward excellence, and we do not respond appropriately to teachers who may need assistance. From our least effective teachers to our very best—all are provided the same professional development opportunities, and all are compensated on the same longevity and degree-based scale.

This will change. The district is positioned to successfully implement this Teacher Effectiveness Initiative. The current momentum in the district demonstrates our capacity to conceive and implement a reform agenda at scale. Memphis City Schools is uniquely poised to set new patterns of achievement for an urban district in the Mid-South.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

To be successful, we must execute each aspect of our strategy with intentionality and fidelity:

We will use a common, agreed-upon process to define and measure what we deem to be effective teaching.

Our entire strategy rests upon being able to speak in an intelligent and common language about teacher effectiveness. Thus, we will create a Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) that consists of the following measures:

Growth in student learning: We will leverage two existing sources of value-added data (i.e. TVAAS and Mathematica) for many core subject areas. We will create assessments as needed in order to obtain value-added data for additional high impact subjects.

Observation of teachers’ practice: We will pilot multiple methods for conducting classroom observations, including video reviews and classroom visits by professional, trained evaluative observers (including principals and peers).

Stakeholder perceptions: We will survey students, parents, and colleagues in order to learn important insights about critical teacher characteristics, such as effort, professionalism, citizenship, teamwork, and academic and non-academic care for students.

Teacher knowledge: We will ascertain how well our teachers understand their subject area content and pedagogy.

We will make smarter decisions about who teaches our students.

We know that all teachers are not the same. The “who” is important. To ensure that all of our students have the most knowledgeable, talented, and dedicated teachers possible, we will do the following:

Improve recruitment and hiring of “high potential” teachers

We will bolster our teacher pipeline by better leveraging existing partnerships that specialize in recruiting and staffing teachers for urban school systems.

Raise the bar and improve the process for granting tenure

Working within our current policy and legal frameworks, we will develop a robust tenure process that is based on our new Teacher Effectiveness Measure.

Increase the retention of effective teachers, particularly early in their careers

We will bolster efforts to retain our best teachers through the early years of their teaching careers (when they are mostly likely to leave). A performance-based retention bonus, vesting over three years, will be provided to our most effective first and second-year teachers to signal the district’s commitment to and need for these teachers.

Increase the turnover of the most ineffective teachers

We will implement a new career management process which brings attention to underperformance, supporting teachers where appropriate and dismissing when necessary.

We will better support, utilize, and compensate our teachers.

We will improve the experiences of our teachers in terms of the support they are provided and the opportunities they are given:

Improve the teacher evaluation process

We will develop a trusted teacher evaluation process, based on the new Teacher Effectiveness Measure, which is objective, meaningful, and useful.

Connect professional support opportunities to individual need

We will focus professional support efforts on frequent, individualized formative observations conducted by peers. Additionally, teachers will be provided individualized support via targeted on-line professional learning opportunities.

Create new and differentiated career paths that promote teachers to increasing levels of influence based on their effectiveness and accomplishment

Based on the TEM, high performing teachers will be eligible for promotions along a new career path comprised of the following teacher roles:

- **Beginning Teacher:** For their first three years of teaching, non-tenured teachers will receive significant formal mentorship and teaching support from Master Teachers.

- Professional Teacher: A Professional Teacher will be similar to the standard role of an MCS classroom teacher today. However, the various changes that accompany this Teacher Effectiveness Initiative will cause this role to be more substantial than has previously been the case.
- Master Teacher: Our very best teachers will be charged with expanding their influence to larger numbers of students (and teachers).

Compensate teachers based on differentiated roles and performance

We will implement a new base compensation structure that is determined by teacher role/performance rather than service time and degree attainment. Additionally, all teachers will be provided performance-based group bonus opportunities for group attainment of student learning growth goals.

Strategically place our best teachers where they are most needed

To ensure that our highest-need students are taught by the most effective teachers, we will: 1) place Master Teachers in the schools where they are most needed, 2) assign Master Teachers to the highest-need students in their existing schools, and 3) cluster “high potential” teacher recruits in high-need schools.

We will improve the surrounding contexts for teachers and students to foster effective teaching.

We will intentionally craft the kinds of environments that help facilitate improved teaching and learning. We will:

Improve principal leadership capacity

We will improve our principals’ capacity through multiple avenues, including targeted recruitment, rigorous performance management, strategic placement, and intensive training and development.

Improve school culture to create conditions that foster effective teaching and learning

In order to establish school climates that support effective teaching, we will strive to raise the expectations of teachers and administrators regarding 1) the capabilities of children and 2) the personal responsibility of teachers and administrators for student achievement.

Develop a new technology platform that will support the data-driven decision-making that is crucial for the success of the Teacher Effectiveness Initiative

New technology systems will enable real-time queries of human capital data linked to student achievement and budget information.