

What Works Clearinghouse



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WWC Quick Review of the Report “An Evaluation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in Chicago: Year Two Impact Report”^{1,2}

What is this study about?

The study examined whether the Chicago Teacher Advancement Program, which provides financial incentives for teachers, leads to improved student achievement and teacher retention.

The study analyzed data on more than 67,000 students in grades 4 through 8 and on more than 8,000 teachers in about 260 elementary schools in the Chicago Public Schools system.

The study compared student achievement and teacher retention rates in the 16 elementary schools that voluntarily participated in the program for one or two years (8 schools each) with the student and teacher outcomes in the remaining, nonparticipating schools.³ Comparison schools were statistically matched to program schools on pre-program measures of school size, teacher retention, accountability status, student achievement, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and truancy rates.

Academic achievement in reading and math was measured using the Illinois Standards Achievement Test, administered in spring of the second study year. Teacher retention was measured as the percentage of teachers who returned to their district and school after the second study year.

Features of the Chicago Teacher Advancement Program

The Chicago Teacher Advancement Program is a local adaptation of a national schoolwide reform that provides annual performance bonuses to teachers based on their value-added to student achievement and on observed classroom performance.

Average bonuses in Chicago were \$1,100 in Year 1 and \$2,600 in Year 2. High-performing teachers were promoted to mentor or master teacher positions, which included salary increases of \$7,000 and \$15,000, respectively.

The program model also included weekly meetings of teachers and mentors (“cluster groups”) and regular classroom observations.

During the study period, the district had not yet begun calculating value-added for individual teachers. Instead, it was measured for the school as a whole in Year 1 and by grade and subject in Year 2.

(continued)

¹ Glazerman, S., & Seifullah, A. (2010). *An evaluation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) in Chicago: Year two impact report* (Reference number 6319-520). Washington, DC: Mathematica Policy Research.

² Absence of conflict of interest: This study was conducted by staff from Mathematica Policy Research, which operates the WWC. For this reason, no Mathematica staff participated in the study’s review.

³ The larger study from which this report is derived includes a random assignment component: Researchers randomly assigned the participating Teacher Advancement Program schools to begin implementing the program either in Year 1 or Year 2 of the study. However, the report reviewed in this quick review covers only the analyses based on the comparison group design.

Quick reviews examine evidence published in a study (supplemented, if necessary, by information from author queries) to assess whether that study’s design meets WWC evidence standards. Quick reviews rely on the effect sizes and significance levels reported by study authors. The WWC rating applies only to the summarized results, and not necessarily to all results presented in the study.

What did the study find?

Compared with a group of matched comparison schools, students at the 16 Teacher Advancement Program schools did not have significantly higher scores on state reading or mathematics tests. The authors reported no significant effect of the Teacher Advancement Program on teacher retention at either the school or district level.

The WWC has reservations about these findings because the groups of students, teachers, and schools compared in the analysis may have differed from each other in ways not controlled for in the analysis.

WWC Rating

The research described in this report meets WWC evidence standards with reservations⁴

Strengths: Teacher Advancement Program schools were matched with similar schools in the district based on demographic and academic characteristics.

Cautions: Although the study matched Teacher Advancement Program schools to comparison schools in the district based on several observable characteristics, it is possible that there were other differences between the two groups that were not accounted for in the analysis; these differences could have influenced student achievement and teacher retention rates.

⁴ Although the version of the report reviewed by the WWC did not contain evidence of baseline equivalence for the analysis samples, the study authors subsequently provided information confirming baseline equivalence of the analysis samples to the review team.