

Professional Pathways for Teachers

Executive Summary of Evaluation Findings From 2017–2018

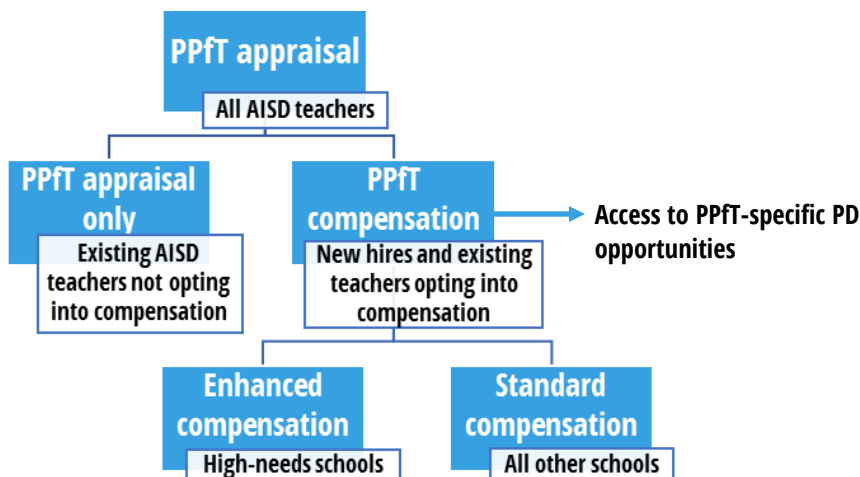
The purpose of Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) is to build the capacity of Austin Independent School District (AISD) teachers through a comprehensive system of supports and compensation with the ultimate goal of having a positive impact on teacher retention and student achievement. PPfT is a human capital system that blends three primary components: (a) appraisal, (b) professional development (PD) opportunities, and (c) innovative compensation.

PPfT appraisal covers three appraisal plans: the standard plan, the new-teacher plan, and the late-contract plan. Appraisal includes instructional practice ratings (50%), professional growth and responsibilities ratings (25%), a student learning objective (SLO) score (15%), and a school-wide value-added (SWVA) score (10%). PPfT appraisal annually results in one of five possible final ratings for teachers (i.e., distinguished, highly effective, effective, minimally effective, and ineffective).

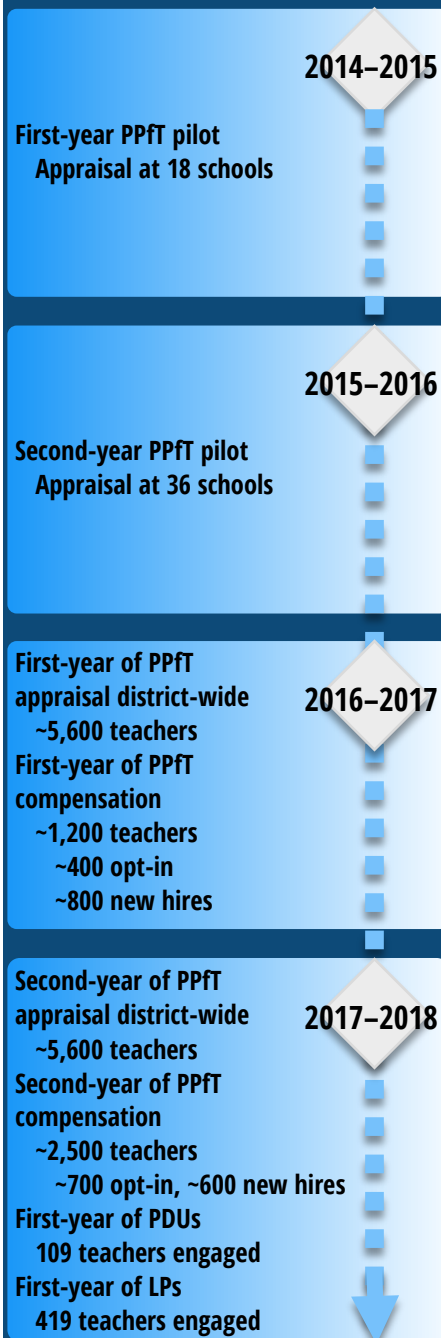
Two types of PPfT-specific PD opportunities were offered to teachers in 2017–2018: professional development units (PDUs) and leadership pathways (LPs). PDUs were an optional 1-year cycle of collaborative action inquiry by small teams of teacher researchers. LPs were an optional 2-year cycle of online, face-to-face, and blended learning; application in the classroom; and reflection on the impact to teaching.

PPfT compensation is a base-building framework that adds permanent pay increases to a teacher’s regular salary through a cumulative point system. Teachers earn points annually from a combination of their PPfT appraisal rating, optional participation in PPfT-specific PD opportunities, and a year of service. Enhanced compensation is provided to teachers at campuses with high instructional need (Figure 1).

Figure 1
 Phase-in Structure of PPfT in 2017–2018



PPfT Implementation Timeline



Three principled questions concerning implementation, outputs, and outcomes framed the evaluation of PPfT: (a) Is PPfT operating as designed? This is a question about implementation. (b) Is PPfT producing what was intended? This is a question of output. (c) Is PPfT achieving the long-term change? This is a question of outcome or impact.

Implementation evidence showed that 2 years into the implementation of PPfT, all teachers were participating in PPfT appraisal, about half were participating in PPfT compensation, and 21% of those in PPfT compensation were engaged in PPfT-specific PD opportunities. Review of outputs suggests that PPfT-produced unbiased and equitable teacher appraisals and compensation rewards were earned fairly across teacher and school characteristics, but calibration, rigor, and alignment of observations to the evaluation rubric should continue to be a focus. Early evidence on outcomes suggests the retention of high-quality teachers improved, and participation in PPfT compensation increased the likelihood of returning the following year (Figure 2).

The upcoming years of implementation aim to add two more LPs, scale up participation in PPfT compensation, increase stakeholder understanding, explore rubric validity, and begin longitudinal outcome analyses.

Figure 2

The 2017–2018 PPfT evaluation findings suggest the human capital system implementation is on-track and continuing to scale up, is yielding equitable appraisal and compensation, and is showing optimistic early evidence on teacher retention.

