

Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) Summary Report

2019–2020

Introduction

Purpose of 2019–2020 Evaluation

The purpose of the 2019–2020 Professional Pathways for Teachers (PPfT) evaluation was to (a) help program staff conceptualize PPfT implementation and perceptions of PPfT and (b) provide summative data on program implementation, outputs, and outcomes.

Program Description

PPfT is a human capital system that blends four primary components: teacher appraisal, teacher professional learning (PL) opportunities, teacher leadership opportunities, and teacher compensation.

Teacher appraisal under PPfT is a multi-measure system that covers three areas: instructional practice (IP); professional growth and responsibilities (PG&R); and two measures of student growth—a teacher-level student learning objective (SLO) measure and a campus-level school-wide value-added (SWVA) measure. PPfT appraisal uses three types of appraisal plans to cover all teachers, inclusive of those new to the district and teaching on special campuses.

Three types of PPfT-specific PL opportunities were offered to teachers: professional development units (PDUs), Leadership Pathways (LPs), and PL aligned to the PPfT observation rubric. PDUs are an optional 1-year cycle of collaborative action inquiry by small teams of teacher researchers participating in PPfT compensation. LPs are an optional 2-year cycle of online, face-to-face, and blended learning, application in the classroom, and reflection on the impact on teaching offered to teachers participating in PPfT compensation. The PL opportunities aligned to the PPfT observation rubric are offered to teachers through the district's human capital management system as a way to target their growth in specific areas of need.

In 2019–2020, two types of leadership opportunities were offered to staff through PPfT. Campus-based staff were offered a stipend-based position in addition to their regular responsibilities to be their campus contact for PPfT. Teachers could also engage in Leadership Pathways +1 (LP+1), which is a leadership role for those who have completed an LP. Experienced LP teachers can opt to extend their PL in their respective pathway district priority area and serve in a leadership role through LP+1. The LP+1 option was new to the 2019–2020 school year.

PPfT compensation is base building, which means it adds permanent pay increases to a teacher's regular salary instead of operating within a traditional step-and-lane salary schedule. The compensation framework builds base increases through a cumulative point system in which teachers earn PPfT compensation points each



year from a year of service, their PPfT appraisal rating, and optional participation in PPfT PL opportunities.

Program Goal

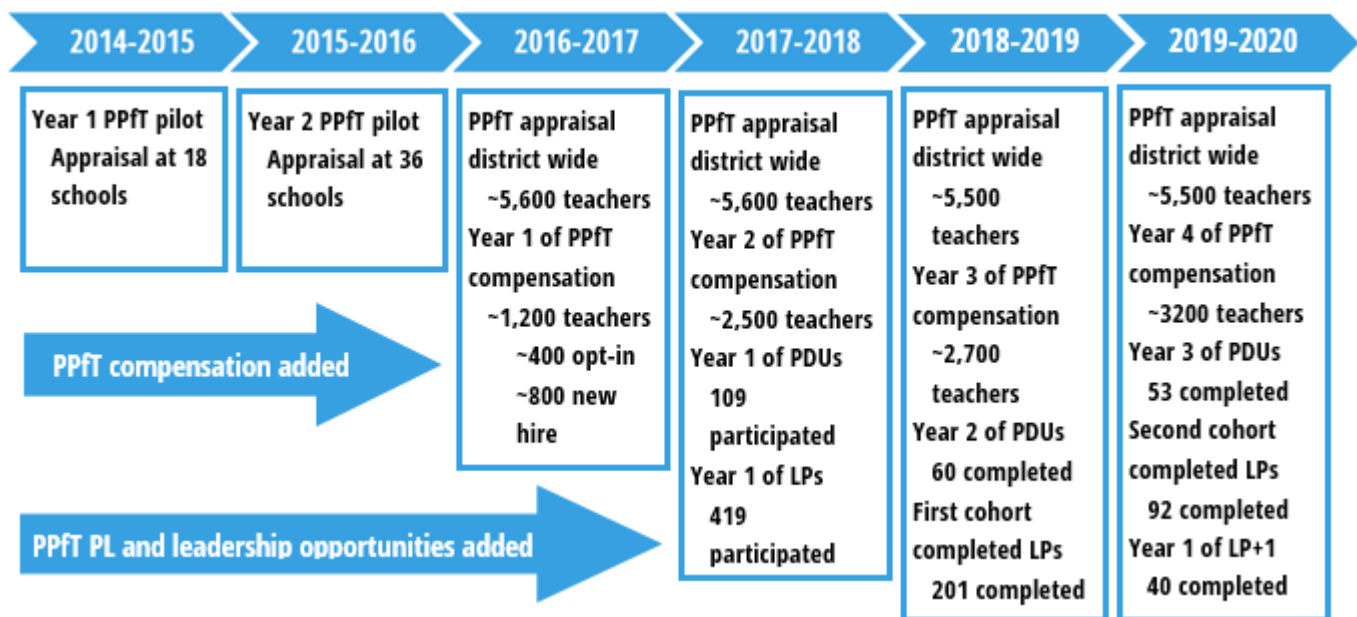
The goal of PPfT is to build the capacity of Austin Independent School District (AISD) teachers through a comprehensive system of supports and compensation. Underlying this goal is the core belief that professionalizing teaching and empowering teachers will lead to positive impacts on teacher retention and student achievement.

Program Background

Timeline: Pilot Years Through the 2019–2020 School Year

PPfT began district-wide implementation in AISD in the 2016–2017 school year, a product of collaboration between AISD, Education Austin, and the American Federation of Teachers. Prior to district-wide implementation, the district ran a 2-year pilot in the district from 2014–2015 through 2015–2016. Unique to the 2016–2017 PPfT implementation was the addition of the second of four PPfT components: PPfT compensation. Thus, the 2019–2020 school year was the fourth year of implementing PPfT compensation under PPfT appraisal. Additionally, in 2019–2020, the first cohort of teachers completed LPs+1 (Figure 1).

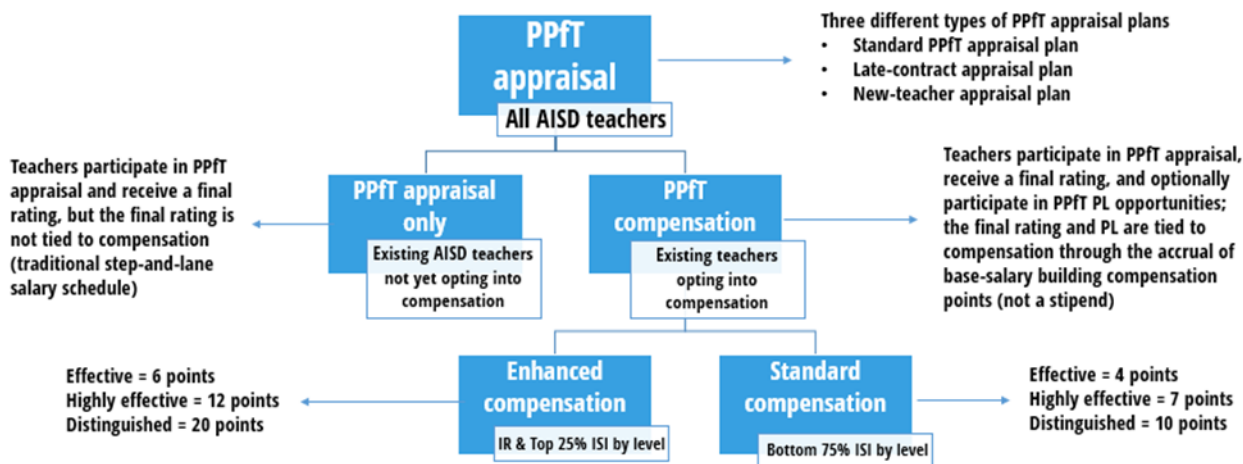
Figure 1. Implementation History Timeline



Program Structure in 2019–2020

Although all teachers participate in PPfT appraisal, the compensation component of PPfT has been implemented through a multiyear scale-up process that includes optional opt-in of current teachers. Existing teachers choosing not to join compensation remain on the traditional step-and-lane salary schedule. Consequently, two systems of teacher compensation temporarily operate under PPfT appraisal (Figure 2). Teachers under both compensation systems participate in PPfT appraisal and receive an appraisal rating.

Figure 2. Structure of PPfT in 2019–2020



However, only teachers participating in PPfT compensation have access to the PPfT-specific PL opportunities and leadership opportunities (i.e., PDUs, LPs, and LPs+1) and base-salary building increases. The two systems of compensation will exist under the PPfT implementation until the step-and-lane option is 100% phased out and all existing teachers and new hires are participating in PPfT compensation. In the 2020–2021 school year, all teachers are participating in PPfT compensation.

Description of 2019–2020 Program Evaluation and Support

Overview

The Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) PPfT support year runs from July to June each school year (e.g., July 2019 to June 2020). However, year-end PPfT appraisal data do not become available until the end of the summer in the subsequent support year (e.g., August 2020). Consequently, DRE PPfT support in 2019–2020 began with analysis and reporting of the prior school year's appraisal results (i.e., 2018–2019), in parallel with the program evaluation activities and program support activities for the 2019–2020 PPfT implementation.

In support of this goal, the 2019–2020 AISD DRE program evaluation and support activities included:

- a [summary report of the 2018–2019 PPfT implementation](#) work
- creation and deployment of the PPfT Perceptions Survey and the PPfT Perceptions Survey Dashboard
- a [summary report of the PPfT Perceptions Survey](#)
- the provision of 2018–2019 data analysis and reporting on the PPfT implementation, outputs, and outcomes in support of board accountability
- participation in the annual PPfT board presentation
- a [summary report of SAS EVAAS](#) and its uses in PPfT appraisal
- a [summary report of 2018–2019 appraisal results for career and technical education \(CTE\) teachers](#)

The ultimate goal of ongoing AISD DRE program evaluation activities is to help program staff understand if, where, and to what extent PPfT is working. This evaluation report focuses on 2019–2020 implementation work.

Evaluation Methods

The 2019–2020 PPfT Implementation Evaluation Process

Evaluation of the 2019–2020 PPfT implementation focused on assessing how well the program was operating in terms of its implementation activities. A few basic questions guided the descriptions:

- How many teachers were appraised under PPfT appraisal in 2019–2020?
- How many teachers participated in PPfT compensation?
- To what extent did teachers participate in PDUs?
- To what extent did teachers participate in LPs?
- What new implementation work occurred in 2019–2020?

Results of the 2019–2020 Program Evaluation

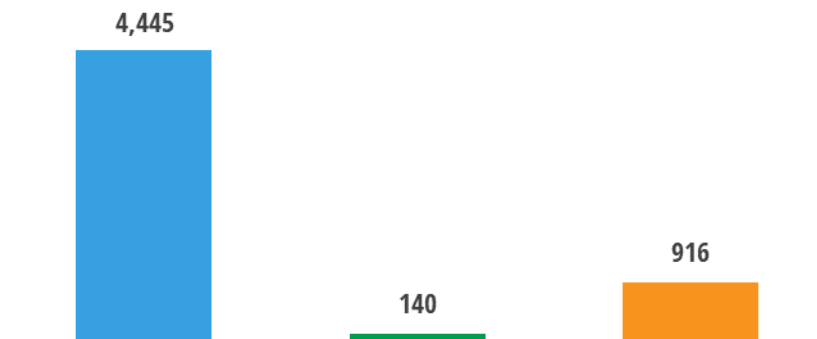
Evaluation of Implementation Work

How many teachers were appraised under PPfT Appraisal in 2019–2020?

In 2019–2020, 5,501 teachers were targeted to a PPfT appraisal plan. Of all teachers in 2019–2020, 4,445 were on a standard PPfT plan, 140 were appraised on a late-contract plan, and 916 were appraised on a new teacher plan.

Figure 3.

The majority of all PPfT teachers (81%) were on a **standard PPfT plan**, while 17% were on a **new teacher plan** and 2% were on a **late-contract plan** in 2019–2020.



Source. PPfT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness

How many teachers participated in PPfT compensation?

Participation in PPfT compensation was the highest it has been since its inception in 2016–2017, with 58% of all teachers participating in compensation in 2019–2020. This is in comparison with 50% of teachers in compensation in 2018–2019 and 45% of teachers in compensation in 2017–2018. Of the 5,501 total teachers in 2019–2020, 3,197 opted in to compensation (Figure 4).

From March 13 through the end of the 2019–2020 school year, all students shifted to virtual learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, the PPfT team needed to modify certain aspects of PPfT appraisal. AISD applied for a Texas Education Agency waiver to grant the Superintendent authority to waive or adjust appraisal plans, components, and timelines. The Board of Trustees accepted the recommendation to suspend policies related to appraisals for all AISD staff on April 6.

As the PPfT evaluation system is connected to compensation for the majority of teaching staff, the Office of Human Capital engaged with PPfT Oversight Committee stakeholders to evaluate the feasibility of delivering a modified set of PPfT appraisal plans for teachers participating in PPfT compensation. Under the modified scenarios, which accounted for teachers missing classroom observations and/or missing SLOs, any PPfT compensation points earned from PPfT appraisal would be combined with other optional PPfT compensation points earned independently through LPs, PDUs, or LP+1. One of six modified 19-20 PPfT appraisal plans was used for those on a standard appraisal plan, one of four used for those on a new teacher appraisal plan, and one of three used for those on a late contract appraisal plan. More information on the weighting and calculations for each of these modified appraisal plans is available upon request.

Figure 4.
 In 2019–2020, more than half of all teachers were in **PPfT compensation**, and less than half were in **appraisal only**.



Source. PPfT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness and HR data tables

Participation in compensation seemed to be more or less likely, depending on a teacher’s appraisal plan. Those on standard PPfT plans had higher rates of participation in compensation than did those on new teacher or late-contract plans. More details are provided in Table 1.

Table 1.
 Sixty-eight percent of teachers on a standard PPfT appraisal plan were in compensation, whereas only 40% of teachers on a late-contract plan and only 12% of teachers on a new teacher plan were in compensation.

Appraisal type	Compensation status	<i>n</i>
PPfT standard	Appraisal only	1,414
	PPfT compensation	3,030
	Total	4,445
PPfT late contract	Appraisal only	84
	PPfT compensation	56
	Total	140
PPfT new teacher	Appraisal only	805
	PPfT compensation	111
	Total	916

Source. PPfT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness and HR data tables

To what extent did teachers participate in PPfT PL opportunities?

In 2019–2020, 53 teachers completed the PDU process and received their compensation points for PDUs (Figure 5). This is slightly down from the past 2 years: 60 teachers participated in and successfully completed a PDU in 2018–2019, and 69 participated in 2017–2018. The reduction in the number of teachers receiving PDU points in 2019–2020 may be a result of COVID-19 and school closures in March 2020.

Figure 5.
 Fewer teachers completed the PDU process in **2019–2020** than **2018–2019** and **2017–2018**.

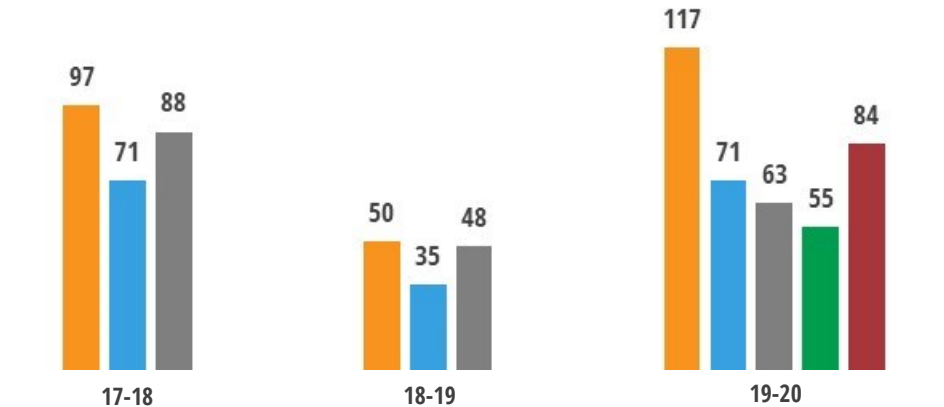


Source. PPfT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness and HR data tables

Two cohorts of teachers progressed through the two-year LP process during the 2019–2020 school year: a cohort that began the LP process in 2018–2019 worked toward completion of their LP journey, and a second cohort that began their LP journey in 2019–2020. The first cohort of teachers, who began their LP journey in 2018–2019, had 92 teachers successfully complete an LP (completing micro credential [MC] 1–4) at the conclusion of the 2019–2020 school year. The second cohort of teachers, those beginning their LP journey in 2019–2020, may have completed MC 1 and MC 2 and may have the opportunity to complete MCs 3 and 4 in 2020–2021. In 2019–2020, teachers could choose from two additional LPs, advanced academics (AA) and problem-based learning (PBL), along with the SEL, literacy, and transformative technology pathways.

Additionally, there was some expected attrition in LP participation over the course of the two-year LP journey. While many may start a LP, not all will continue through the four MCs and graduate. The number of teachers who began an LP, by year that they began, is displayed in Figure 6.

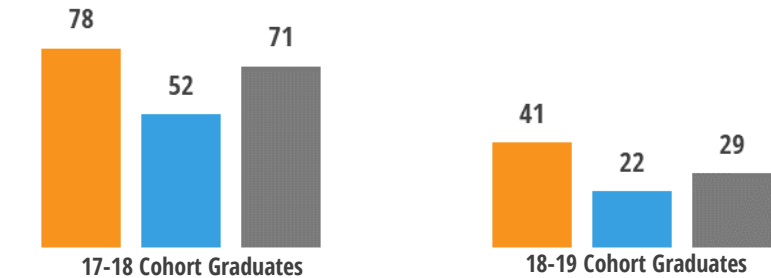
Figure 6.
Across years, those beginning a pathway were most commonly in the SEL pathway, followed by transformative technology and literacy. In 2019–2020, PBL became a popular pathway choice, while less enrolled in AA.



Source. PPFT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness and HR data tables

Of the 92 LP graduates who graduated in spring of 2020, 22 successfully completed the literacy LP, 41 completed the social-emotional learning LP, and 29 completed the transformative technology pathway. A comparison of 2018–2019 graduates and 2017–2018 graduates is displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7.
Graduates from LPs in the 2017–2018 cohort and 2018–2019 cohort are most likely to be in the SEL pathway, followed by transformative technology and literacy.



Source. PPFT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness and HR data tables

Additionally, new to 2019–2020 was a group of teacher leaders who had previously graduated from a LP participating in LP+1. In 2019–2020, 40 teachers participated in LP+1 and received a point for their participation. Those in LP+1 could serve in a variety of positions through LP+1 (Table 2).

Table 2.

Forty-five percent of those in LP+1 were scorers, 37.5% were mentors, and 17.5% were PL facilitators.

LP+1 option	<i>n</i>
Mentor	15
PL Facilitator	7
Scorer	18
Total	40

Source. PPfT 2019–2020 data retrieved from the Office of Employee Effectiveness

What new implementation work occurred during 2019–2020?

During the 2019–2020 school year, new implementation work was conducted related to the PL opportunities and teacher leadership opportunities components of PPfT. The two new pathways, AA and PBL, were launched in 2019–2020, and another new pathway, cultural proficiency and inclusiveness (CP&I), was also prepared for launch in the 2020–2021 school year. Three new leadership opportunities were also launched for teacher participation in the 2019–2020 school year. Starting in the 2019–2020 school year, teachers who earned their badge in a pathway were eligible to earn additional compensation points by serving in a leadership position through LP+1, providing mentoring to teachers currently engaged in a pathway, scoring LP MC submissions, or delivering PL opportunities on pathways to teachers.

Due to the many pathways that have been created, 2020–2021 is also the first year of implementing a “three on, three off” system, in which new spots are offered in three pathways in one year, and the other three pathways in the following year. In 2020–2021, LP participants can opt into the AA pathway, CP&I pathway, or transformative technology pathway, while those who began a pathway in 2019–2020 still participate in their original pathway of choice. At the time of the publication of this report, these were the running counts of participants in each pathway:

- AA 2019–2020 cohort running count = 20 teachers
- AA 2020–2021 cohort running count = 54 teachers
- CP&I 2020–2021 cohort running count = 69 teachers
- PBL 2019–2020 cohort running count = 33 teachers
- Literacy 2019–2020 cohort running count = 31 teachers
- SEL 2019–2020 cohort running count = 50 teachers
- Transformative technology 2019–2020 cohort running count = 34 teachers
- Transformative technology 2020–2021 cohort running count = 100 teacher

Summary and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

PPfT evolved in several distinct ways in its fourth year of implementation (i.e., 2019–2020). PPfT PL opportunities continued to expand as two new pathways were launched (AA and PBL), while another new pathway (CP&I) was prepared for launch. Additionally, 2019–2020 experienced growth in the leadership opportunities component of PPfT, in which the LP+1 program was launched and had active participation. Lastly, conversations began in 2019–2020 about having all teachers participate in PPfT compensation in 2020–2021, which was considered a major success for PPfT. PPfT continues to work toward its goal of empowering and professionalizing teachers by offering more competitive salaries, more targeted PL opportunities that align with district initiatives, and more opportunities for teachers to be leaders on their campus.

Recommendations

The body of evaluative work on PPfT conducted in 2019–2020 collectively supported several recommendations for future programmatic and evaluative efforts. These are not exhaustive recommendations.

- Given the continued expansion of PL opportunities and leadership opportunities in the 2019–2020 school year, consideration should be given to evaluation of the efficacy of these opportunities for growing teacher capacity, increasing teacher choice, differentiating compensation, and retaining high-quality teachers in the classroom.
- Revisions to the PPfT Perceptions Survey and administration schedule are recommended to improve the measurement of stakeholders' perceptions.
- Education, training, and expectations related to observation ratings should continue to be a focus of annual onboarding and certification, with additional emphasis on differentiating 2s from 3s and 3s from 4s.
 - Revisions and updates to PPfT appraisal rubrics, specifically the IP and PG&R rubrics, should be considered to more accurately measure quality teaching and as a means to provide teachers with more targeted, useful feedback on their teaching.

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