

Tornillo ISD

Teacher Retention Growth Model

When I arrived at Tornillo in June of 2002 the district had just been notified of the test results from the prior spring's administration. With the middle school saddled with a "Low Performing" rating for the third consecutive year, the Texas Education Agency was demanding change.

School leaders have many differing approaches to academic performance that work for them. My method of choice is to focus on the recruiting and retention of quality instructors in the classroom rather than dabble in the many "magic" curricula available. Essential to this paradigm is the removal of poor performers; and here is where our growth model comes into play.

We recognize that a teacher has little or no control over the latent ability of the students who enter the classroom on day one. As such, logic would suggest that the teacher's performance be measured by student growth as opposed to the overall pass rate. In this sense, we see a teacher who raises a group that had a prior aggregate pass rate of 52% to 60% as doing a better job than one who takes an incoming group with a 90% pass rate and drops them to 80% - which is still in the "Recognized" range.

Here is a sound-bite listing of the process:

1. TAKS results are analyzed and entered into database software.
2. This software contains each student's results from every tested year, dating back to their first test in the 3rd grade.
3. Using a find and sort process we can analyze that particular cohort during their entire school career. The group's passing rate can be assessed in a cohort fashion regardless of the "scattered" state in the prior years.
4. Utilizing a locally developed set of standards we "grade" the teacher's performance.
5. Teachers who establish a two-year pattern of dropping student performance are asked to resign or be non-renewed **effective the end of the coming year.***
6. These teachers have no contract action taken during the ensuing spring as they have "already resigned" or been non-renewed.
7. When the TAKS scores arrive in May we analyze the teacher's performance.
8. If the performance has improved, we rehire the teacher. If the performance is still substandard, we honor the resignation.

*This odd timing is necessitated by the disconnect between the state law requiring contract action before the TAKS scores are released; 45 days before the last day of instruction - usually in March. TAKS scores are released in mid-May.