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Key Findings

- By and large, TFA teachers in their first few years of teaching outperformed their non-TFA counterparts on TVAAS.
- On TEM observations, TFA and non-TFA teachers in their first or second year of teaching performed comparably to one another. However, third- and fourth-year TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts on this measure.
- On the TEM professionalism measure, TFA teachers outperformed non-TFA teachers in about half of the comparisons examined; the two groups performed comparably in the other half of the comparisons.
- On the TEM student-perception measure, most of the TFA/non-TFA comparisons did not yield statistically significant differences. However, TFA teachers outperformed non-TFA teachers in 2016–17.

Introduction

Shelby County Schools (SCS) has been partnering with Teach for America (TFA) to recruit and train new teachers since 2006–07. However, over this 15-year partnership, the District has never conducted an evaluation assessing the effectiveness of its TFA recruits until now. This report presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of four cohorts of TFA teachers, using four different measures of teacher effectiveness from the past three pre-pandemic years. The aim of this evaluation is to provide the District with its first formal examination of the effectiveness of its TFA teachers.

Teach for America

TFA is a national teacher residency organization that is "focused on building the movement to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort."[1] TFA recruits college graduates of all ages to commit to two years of teaching in a public school in which at least half of the students are economically disadvantaged. TFA has 50 regions across the United States, ranging from rural areas to large cities. TFA designates four or five of its regions as "high-need," where they work to place as many TFA recruits as possible; Memphis is currently one of the high-need regions.

TFA summarizes its training and support model thusly: "Training typically includes completing certification work and exams once you get in, attending a five-to-eight week summer training program before year one, working with staff to grow your skills, and completing a certification or master's degree program in your region while you teach."[2]

TFA Memphis provides the training and support for the TFA teachers in the Memphis region. Below is a description of the TFA Memphis model (taken from the TFA website).[3]

Initial Summer Training

The summer before you begin teaching, we host a six-week training session right here in Memphis, known as insitutue [sic]. At institute, our two key priorities are for you to build your leadership and to build your community. You will spend time in professional development sessions designed to ensure you are ready for the first day of your fall teaching placement, with a focus on lesson planning and execution, classroom learning environment, building authentic relationships, and cultural competence. We'll spend time together as a team exploring our Memphis GRIND values and learning about our city's history and its present. In weeks two through six of institute, you'll also teach a summer school class daily, with the support of your coach and learning cohort…. Room and board are covered during institute (either in university dorms, or via a stipend for those with existing housing in Memphis). We also provide transportation to the school site and all required off-campus activities throughout the summer.

Year One of Teaching

During your first year, our training focuses on helping you lead your students to academic achievement by building teacher skills in the context of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. We believe these skills have to be broken down into component parts so you can learn how to put them back together, with lots of public practice, opportunities to observe exemplars, and ample 1:1 directive coaching.

Year Two of Teaching

During your second year, our training centers on vision-aligned leadership, furthering your development as a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy practitioner, and helping you further strengthen bonds with your peers. We do this through disruptive experiences that are responsibly debriefed within peer-led learning circles. We focus on facilitating peer coaching in partnership with you.
After completing your [two-year] corps commitment, we will support you as you join our outstanding alumni community in the ongoing effort to lead change and advocate for educational equity from every sector.

Teacher Certification

TFA Memphis is a teacher licensing body, meaning that TFA teachers can get a Tennessee teaching license by completing the TFA requirements: "attend all required Teach For America professional development experiences, pass state-mandated certification exams, and hold a regionally accredited bachelor's degree with a minimum GPA of 2.75."[3] TFA Memphis provides corps members with support for passing the required Praxis exams.

In addition, TFA Memphis teachers have the option to obtain a master's degree with one of three academic institutions: Christian Brothers University (Master of Education), Rhodes College (Master of Arts in Urban Education), or Johns Hopkins University (Master of Science Education). TFA teachers receive academic credit for their teaching service; the two local institutions also offer financial assistance to TFA teachers.

Synopsis of Prior Research on TFA

The academic literature investigating the effectiveness of TFA teachers is both sizeable and mixed. To date, no clear consensus exists on whether TFA teachers are more, less, or equally effective, as compared to teachers from traditional education programs. Since the primary aim of this evaluation is to explore the effectiveness of TFA teachers specifically in the context of SCS, only a very brief overview of the large body of extant literature is presented here, with heavy reliance on literature reviews rather than individual studies.

The National Education Policy Center conducted a review of the literature on TFA teacher effectiveness in 2014[4]. Here is a summary of their findings (pp. i–ii):

> *Despite a series of non-peer-reviewed studies funded by TFA and other organizations that purport to show benefits of TFA teachers, peer-reviewed research on their impact continues to produce a mixed picture. The peer-reviewed research suggests that results are affected by the experience and certification level of the TFA teachers as well as by the group of teachers with whom those TFA teachers are compared. The question's specifics strongly determine the answer.*

> *The practical question faced by most districts is whether TFA teachers do as well as or better than fully credentialed non-TFA teachers with whom those school districts aim to staff their schools. On this question, the predominance of peer-reviewed studies have indicated that, on average, the students of novice TFA teachers perform less well in reading and mathematics assessments than those of fully credentialed beginning teachers. But the differences are small, and the TFA teachers do better if compared with other less-trained and inexperienced teachers. Again, the comparison group matters greatly….*

> *Experience has a positive effect for both TFA and non-TFA teachers. Most peer-reviewed studies find that the relatively few TFA teachers who stay long enough to become fully credentialed (typically after two years) appear to do about as well as other similarly experienced, fully credentialed teachers in teaching reading and sometimes do better than this comparison group in teaching mathematics.*

In 2016, What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) examined the landscape of studies on TFA teachers' impact on academic achievement[5] and found seven that met their criteria for review (p. 4):

> *The WWC identified 24 eligible studies that investigated the effects of TFA teachers on the academic achievement of students in elementary, middle, and high school. An additional 21 studies were identified but do not meet WWC eligibility criteria for review in this topic area….*

> *The WWC reviewed 24 eligible studies against group design standards. Three studies are randomized controlled trials that meet WWC group design standards without reservations, and four studies use quasi-experimental designs that meet WWC group design standards with reservations. Those seven studies are summarized in this report. The remaining 17 studies do not meet WWC group design standards.*

They summarized the findings of the seven studies in their review thusly (p. 1):

> *TFA teachers were found to have positive effects on mathematics achievement, potentially positive effects on science achievement, and no discernible effects on social studies achievement and English language arts achievement for students in grades pre-K–12.*

This table provides more detail (p. 2):

Outcome domain	Rating of effectiveness	Improvement index *(percentile points)*		Number of studies	Number of students[a]	Extent of evidence
		Average	Range			
Mathematics achievement	Positive effects	+4	−1 to +8	6	65,324	Medium to large
Science achievement	Potentially positive effects	+7	na	1	36,104	Small
Social studies achievement	No discernible effects	+3	na	1	6,051	Small
English language arts achievement	No discernible effects	+1	−2 to +2	5	53,595	Medium to large

na = not applicable

[a] The reported sample sizes may count some individual students more than once because some studies examined data from multiple school years.

In 2018, The Campbell Collaborative released an analysis (conducted in 2015) in which they surveyed the literature for studies to include in a systematic review of TFA teaching effectiveness[6]. Here is what they found (pp. 5–6):

> *Studies had to be a quantitative evaluation of the effects of TFA on K-12 student academic outcomes. Studies also had to use a research design which: 1. allowed valid causal inferences about TFA's effects, 2. targeted participants K–12 students taught by TFA corps members or TFA alumni in the USA, 3. compared TFA corps members to novice teachers, or compared TFA alumni with veteran teachers, and 4. reported at least one academic student outcome in math, ELA, or science domains.*

> *A total of 919 citations were retrieved on TFA, of which 24 studies were eligible for review. However, when the research design and study quality along with types of TFA corps members and non-TFA teachers compared were reviewed, the evidence base for estimating the effects of TFA on student academic outcomes was reduced to just four studies.*

> *There is no significant effect on reading from teaching by TFA corps members in their first or second year of teaching elementary-grade students (PreK – grade 5) compared to non-TFA teachers who are also in their first or second year of teaching elementary-grade students. There is a small positive effect for early elementary-grade students (PreK to grade 2) in reading but not in math.*

> *However, given the small evidence base, these findings should be treated with caution.*

Taken together, the three systematic reviews presented above demonstrate the lack of convergence in findings across studies of TFA teachers' impact on student achievement. More experimental and quasi-experimental studies have been produced since those reviews were conducted, many of which

found TFA teachers to be more effective than their non-TFA counterparts in certain subjects and/or grade bands[7,8,9,10]. But, as noted earlier, the comparison groups chosen make a great deal of difference in the results, and thus a *simple* answer to the question of TFA effectiveness is not likely to emerge.

Finally, it should be noted that student performance on achievement tests should not be the only measure of a teacher's effectiveness. In an effort to measure TFA's impact on other student outcomes, one recent study[11] on data from Miami-Dade County Public Schools examined "the relationship between being in a TFA classroom and five non-test student outcomes commonly found in administrative datasets: days absent, days suspended, GPA, classes failed, and grade repetition" (p. 168). The study found "suggestive evidence that students taught by TFA teachers in elementary and middle schools were less likely to miss school due to unexcused absences and suspensions compared with students taught by non-TFA teachers in the same school, although point estimates are very small. Other outcomes… showed no evidence of a TFA effect" (p. 168).

Moving on from the complex literature on TFA's effectiveness in other districts across the nation, this report will now present findings specific to TFA's presence in SCS.

Methods

Four cohorts of TFA teachers were examined in this study: those entering the District in 2015–16, 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19. Their performance was assessed for the three most recent years for which comprehensive data are available: 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19.

This evaluation analyzed four measures to compare the teaching effectiveness of TFA teachers with that of their counterparts who were not part of the TFA program. Since teaching effectiveness increases with experience, each non-TFA comparison group was limited to teachers with the same amount of teaching experience as their TFA counterparts.

Independent samples t-tests were employed to make the comparisons. This method compares the mean score of one group to the mean score of another group and assesses the statistical significance of the difference between the two means. The four measures used for the TFA/non-TFA mean comparisons are discussed below.

Measures

TVAAS Scores

The first measure consists of teachers' scores from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). Teacher-level TVAAS data are designed to show how much *growth* a teacher's students exhibited on achievement tests from one year to the next. A teacher's TVAAS scores are generated by assessing her students' performance on end-of-year state-mandated assessments in light of those students' past performance on such assessments. Students outpacing their past performance will raise the teacher's TVAAS score, while students falling short of their past performance will lower it.

For each year in this study, teachers of tested subjects received a separate TVAAS effectiveness score for each subject or grade level tested—so if a teacher taught eighth-grade mathematics and Algebra I, he received two effectiveness scores. Teachers were also assigned an overall composite score, calculated as a 3-year, 2-year, or 1-year average, depending on the number of years of data available for each teacher. This inconsistency in composite scores is unfortunate, because it is important to be able to look at a teacher's overall TVAAS performance from year to year, without influence from previous years. This is especially important for the first few years of a teacher's career, when we expect the most dramatic improvements to occur.

Thus, to track teacher performance from year to year, it was necessary to create for each teacher a single-year composite score for each of the three years in the study. This was accomplished by using a weighted average, taking into account the number of students in each tested grade/subject. So if a teacher taught eighth-grade mathematics to 30 students and Algebra I to 120 students, the calculation gives the Algebra I score four times more weight than the eighth-grade mathematics score.

Each teacher's year-specific TVAAS composite was computed using the standardized, continuous index variable that underlies the ordinal TVAAS levels of 1 to 5 with which most Tennessee educators are familiar. The index variable consists of an estimate (produced by the TVAAS statistical model) divided by its standard error. The TVAAS effectiveness levels are derived from the values of the index variable as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Designation of TVAAS effectiveness levels based on TVAAS index

Level	Label	Underlying index
1	Least effective	index < -2
2	Approaching average effectiveness	-2 ≤ index < -1
3	Average effectiveness	-1 ≤ index < 1
4	Above average effectiveness	1 ≤ index < 2
5	Most effective	2 ≤ index

TEM Component Scores

The other three measures employed in this evaluation are all components of the TEM (Teacher Effectiveness Measure), which is SCS's teacher evaluation system. Every teacher receives a TEM score each year (unlike TVAAS, which applies only to teachers of tested subjects). The TEM comprises multiple measures: observations, professionalism, student perceptions, student achievement, and student growth. The TEM components are each rated on a 1–5 scale, as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. TEM effectiveness ratings

Rating	Label
1	Significantly below expectations
2	Below expectations
3	Meeting expectations
4	Above expectations
5	Significantly above expectations

The components of the TEM are combined to create an overall TEM score. However, this evaluation separately analyzes three of the individual TEM components, because much of the overall TEM score consists—in varying degrees according to circumstance—of TVAAS performance. Since some teachers are assigned schoolwide TVAAS scores because they do not teach tested subjects, it is much more desirable to analyze separately: 1) TVAAS scores (for teachers of tested subjects), and 2) components of the TEM that are not related to achievement tests (for all teachers). The three non-achievement-related TEM components are discussed below.

Observation scores. Certified TEM observers conduct announced and unannounced observations of all SCS teachers (and other certified staff) throughout each school year. Principals, vice principals, assistant principals, PLC (professional learning community) coaches, content specialists, district coaches, National Board Certified Teachers, and specialty teachers are among the designated positions eligible to become certified TEM observers. New hires were to be observed four times throughout the year: once announced and three times unannounced. All other teachers were to have one announced and one unannounced observation, unless they had scored less than a 3 on any one of several TEM components the previous year. In that case, they were to have one announced and two unannounced observations. A teacher's final score on the observation component of the TEM consists of the average of all her observation scores for the year.

Professionalism scores. From the 2018–19 TEM Manual (p. 12):

> *The Professionalism component is designed to capture a teacher's efforts to enhance their practice through professional learning and growth, use of data, school and community involvement, and leadership....*
>
> *Teachers and school administrators will collect and document evidence of a teachers' [sic] professionalism throughout the course of the school year. The school administrator will then review the evidence and determine a final score during [a conference at the end of the school year...].*
>
> *Administrators and teachers are encouraged to use the Professionalism Rubric Scoring Guide... to assist in evidence, artifact collection, and assigning ratings. Teachers should submit 3-5 relevant artifacts per indicator from the current school year.*

Student-perception scores. From the inception of the TEM through 2017–18, the district surveyed students twice a year using the Tripod survey instrument "to assess observable teaching practices in their classroom" (2017–18 TEM Manual, p. 11). However, beginning in 2018–19, the district switched to the Panorama platform for its student-perception surveys. According to the Panorama Student Survey User Guide, "the survey measures student perceptions of teaching and learning, culture and climate, and student experiences in the classroom.... Schools and districts can customize the survey by selecting the topics they value most" (p. 2). SCS customized its Panorama surveys (grades K–2, 3–5, and 6–12) to focus on assessing student perceptions of teaching and learning in a particular class.

Methodological Note

Because TVAAS scores are available only for teachers in tested subjects/grade levels, the sample size for each cohort of TFA teachers in District-managed schools was quite small. To boost TFA sample sizes—and thus statistical power—the TVAAS analyses included teachers in both District-managed and charter schools. The TEM analyses, however, included District-managed teachers only, as charter schools do not participate in the TEM. Since all District-managed teachers receive TEM scores regardless of subject or grade level taught, TFA sample sizes were adequate in the TEM analyses even though charter teachers were not included. (Note that this methodology is in keeping with the District's multiple evaluations of Memphis Teacher Residency, another SCS teacher pipeline.)

Results

The findings of the TVAAS analyses are presented in Table 3. The results for the analyses of the three TEM components—observations, professionalism, and student perceptions—are presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6, respectively. Each table is followed by a brief summary of its findings.

Table 3 (TVAAS) displays results first in the units of the index variable (i.e., standard errors) and then converted into effectiveness levels as described in Table 1. While the index units show the group comparisons more precisely, the effectiveness levels may be more readily understandable. The TVAAS effectiveness levels of 1 through 5 are well known to most Tennessee educators, so seeing the standard error units translated into the effectiveness levels can help provide substance and context to the results.

Table 3. Mean differences† between TFA and non-TFA teachers' TVAAS composites

School year	Years of exp.	Teacher group	Mean TVAAS composite‡		Mean difference^		N	Statistical significance
2016–17	1	TFA	–0.77	Level 3	1.08	1 level	35	YES (p=.039)
		Non-TFA	–1.85	Level 2			146	
	2	TFA	–0.55	Level 3	0.44	0 levels	47	NO (p=.383)
		Non-TFA	–0.99	Level 3			156	
	1–2	TFA	–0.65	Level 3	0.76	1 level	82	YES (p=.037)
		Non-TFA	–1.41	Level 2			302	
2017–18	1	TFA	–0.95	Level 3	0.32	1 level	61	NO (p=.378)
		Non-TFA	–1.27	Level 2			311	
	2	TFA	0.90	Level 3	1.72	0 levels	42	YES (p=.001)
		Non-TFA	–0.82	Level 3			186	
	3	TFA	0.90	Level 3	1.35	0 levels	25	YES (p=.039)
		Non-TFA	–0.45	Level 3			161	
	1–3	TFA	0.01	Level 3	0.95	0 levels	128	YES (p=.001)
		Non-TFA	–0.94	Level 3			658	
2018–19	1	TFA	–0.98	Level 3	0.17	1 level	37	NO (p=.769)
		Non-TFA	–1.15	Level 2			219	
	2	TFA	–0.12	Level 3	0.96	1 level	50	YES (p=.014)
		Non-TFA	–1.08	Level 2			208	
	3 or 4	TFA	0.41	Level 3	0.82	0 levels	34	MARGINAL (p=.056)
		Non-TFA	–0.41	Level 3			253	
	1–4	TFA	–0.23	Level 3	0.63	0 levels	121	YES (p=.010)
		Non-TFA	–0.86	Level 3			680	

† assessed via independent-samples t-test

‡ method for obtaining TVAAS composites described in "TVAAS Scores" section; conversion of TVAAS index into effectiveness levels explained in Table 1; first column: TVAAS index (standard error units); second column: corresponding TVAAS effectiveness level

^ mean differences shown two ways:
- TVAAS index: the given TFA group's mean TVAAS composite minus that of the non-TFA group
- TVAAS effectiveness level: the given TFA group's mean effectiveness level minus that of the non-TFA group

Table 3 summary:

- TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts in every comparison, although three of the results were not statistically significant.
- The cohort-specific statistically significant differences ranged from 0.82 to 1.72 standard error units, which is very substantial.
- In about half the comparisons, the TFA teachers scored in a higher effectiveness level than their non-TFA counterparts.

Table 4. Mean differences† between TFA and non-TFA teachers' TEM observation scores

School year	Years of experience	Teacher group	Mean score‡	Mean difference	N	Statistical significance
2016–17	1	TFA	3.39	–0.13	31	NO
		Non-TFA	3.52		270	(p=.243)
	2	TFA	3.84	0.01	53	NO
		Non-TFA	3.83		334	(p=.899)
	1–2	TFA	3.67	–0.02	84	NO
		Non-TFA	3.69		604	(p=.845)
2017–18	1	TFA	3.52	0.01	45	NO
		Non-TFA	3.51		574	(p=.937)
	2	TFA	3.80	–0.01	29	NO
		Non-TFA	3.81		379	(p=.942)
	3	TFA	4.33	0.40	23	YES
		Non-TFA	3.93		343	(p=.000)
	1–3	TFA	3.79	0.08	97	NO
		Non-TFA	3.71		1,296	(p=.206)
2018–19	1	TFA	3.48	0.02	44	NO
		Non-TFA	3.46		566	(p=.735)
	2	TFA	3.78	–0.01	46	NO
		Non-TFA	3.79		580	(p=.951)
	3 or 4	TFA	4.36	0.29	32	YES
		Non-TFA	4.07		681	(p=.001)
	1–4	TFA	3.83	0.04	122	NO
		Non-TFA	3.79		1,827	(p=.522)

† assessed via independent-samples t-test;   ‡ on a scale of 1 to 5

Table 4 summary:

- Among first and second year teachers, TFA and non-TFA teachers did not perform significantly differently from one another on their TEM observations.
- However, among teachers with more experience (three or four years), TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts:
  - In 2017–18, third-year TFA teachers outperformed third-year non-TFA teachers by 0.40 points, or 40% of an effectiveness rating.
  - In 2018–19, TFA teachers in their third or fourth year of teaching outperformed their non-TFA counterparts by 0.29 points, or 29% of an effectiveness rating.

Table 5. Mean differences† between TFA and non-TFA teachers' TEM professionalism scores

School year	Years of experience	Teacher group	Mean score‡	Mean difference	N	Statistical significance
2016–17	1	TFA	3.75	0.00	31	NO
		Non-TFA	3.75		270	(p=.976)
	2	TFA	4.10	0.07	53	NO
		Non-TFA	4.03		334	(p=.568)
	1–2	TFA	3.97	0.06	84	NO
		Non-TFA	3.91		604	(p=.509)
2017–18	1	TFA	3.96	0.28	45	YES
		Non-TFA	3.68		574	(p=.027)
	2	TFA	4.23	0.24	29	MARGINAL
		Non-TFA	3.99		379	(p=.089)
	3	TFA	4.50	0.34	23	YES
		Non-TFA	4.16		343	(p=.037)
	1–3	TFA	4.17	0.27	97	YES
		Non-TFA	3.90		1,296	(p=.001)
2018–19	1	TFA	3.91	0.18	44	NO
		Non-TFA	3.73		565	(p=.136)
	2	TFA	4.32	0.31	46	YES
		Non-TFA	4.01		580	(p=.007)
	3 or 4	TFA	4.37	0.14	32	NO
		Non-TFA	4.23		681	(p=.296)
	1–4	TFA	4.18	0.17	122	YES
		Non-TFA	4.01		1,826	(p=.005)

† assessed via independent-samples t-test;   ‡ on a scale of 1 to 5

Table 5 summary:

- In 2016–17, TFA and non-TFA teachers performed comparably on the TEM professionalism measure.
- However, in 2017–18, each cohort of TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts by between roughly a quarter and a third of an effectiveness rating (0.24–0.34 points).
- In 2018–19, TFA teachers in their second year outperformed non-TFA second-year teachers by 0.31 points, or 31% of an effectiveness rating.
- In 2018–19, TFA teachers in their first, third, or fourth years of teaching scored higher, on average, than their non-TFA counterparts, but the differences were not statistically significant. However, increasing statistical power by combining all four cohorts yielded a statistically significant result: TFA teachers outperformed non-TFA teachers by 0.17 points overall, or 17% of an effectiveness rating.

Table 6. Mean differences† between TFA and non-TFA teachers' TEM student-perception scores

School year	Years of experience	Teacher group	Mean score‡	Mean difference	N	Statistical significance
2016–17	1	TFA	3.72	0.10	18	NO
		Non-TFA	3.62		220	(p=.670)
	2	TFA	4.13	0.36	32	YES
		Non-TFA	3.77		257	(p=.011)
	1–2	TFA	3.98	0.28	50	YES
		Non-TFA	3.70		477	(p=.018)
2017–18	1	TFA	3.41	–0.27	27	NO
		Non-TFA	3.68		445	(p=.115)
	2	TFA	3.94	0.25	18	NO
		Non-TFA	3.69		295	(p=.247)
	3	TFA	4.18	0.32	11	NO
		Non-TFA	3.86		256	(p=.290)
	1–3	TFA	3.73	0.00	56	NO
		Non-TFA	3.73		996	(p=.992)
2018–19	1	TFA	4.08	–0.02	24	NO
		Non-TFA	4.10		436	(p=.941)
	2	TFA	4.30	0.09	20	NO
		Non-TFA	4.21		455	(p=.615)
	3 or 4	TFA	4.29	0.18	17	NO
		Non-TFA	4.11		499	(p=.332)
	1–4	TFA	4.21	0.07	61	NO
		Non-TFA	4.14		1,390	(p=.470)

† assessed via independent-samples t-test;   ‡ on a scale of 1 to 5

Table 6 summary:

- In 2016–17, TFA teachers outperformed non-TFA teachers on the TEM student-perception measure (the Tripod survey).
  - Second-year TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts by 0.36 points, or more than a third of an effectiveness rating.
  - First- and second-year TFA teachers together (combined for statistical power) outperformed their non-TFA counterparts by 0.28 points, or 28% of an effectiveness rating.
- On the 2017–18 Tripod survey, first-year TFA teachers underperformed first-year non-TFA teachers, while second- and third-year TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts. None of those results were statistically significant, however—likely owing to low statistical power from small sample sizes.
- In 2018–19, TFA and non-TFA teachers performed fairly comparably on the TEM student-perception measure (the Panorama survey).

Conclusion

This evaluation examined the performance of four cohorts of TFA teachers over three years, using four different measures of teacher effectiveness. In some instances, the TFA teachers did not perform significantly differently from their non-TFA counterparts of equal teaching experience. However, for each type of measure, the TFA teachers outperformed their non-TFA counterparts in anywhere from two to eight of the 11 comparisons made. And in no instances did the TFA teachers significantly underperform their non-TFA counterparts. All in all, the findings presented here indicate that TFA is providing the District with teachers who are more effective than the average teacher recruit.

Epilogue

The comparison groups of non-TFA teachers in the analyses presented here included teachers recruited and trained by Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR), another SCS teacher pipeline partner. Likewise, in multiple past evaluations of MTR using the same methods and measures as in this report, the non-MTR comparison groups included TFA teachers. In other words, teachers from each residency program were compared to a larger pool of District teachers that included the teachers from the other residency program. TFA and MTR each made up a relatively small percentage of each overall cohort of District teachers, however, so neither program's teachers formed the bulk of the other program's comparison group.

That said, the presence of the *other* pipeline in each pipeline's District comparison group may have led to an understating of the effectiveness of both TFA and MTR, as compared to *non-residency* teachers. As presented in this evaluation, TFA teachers tended to outperform their non-TFA counterparts (of whom a small portion were MTR teachers). Similarly, past District evaluations of MTR have indicated that early-career MTR teachers tended to outperform their non-MTR counterparts (of whom a small portion were TFA teachers). It is thus reasonable to conclude that if MTR had been excluded from the TFA analyses, then the TFA teachers might have outperformed their non-residency (i.e., non-TFA/non-MTR) counterparts by wider margins than were found in this study. And one could also conclude that if TFA had been excluded from the MTR analyses, then the MTR teachers might have outperformed their non-residency (i.e., non-MTR/non-TFA) counterparts by wider margins as well.

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[1] https://www.teachforamerica.org/terms-of-use

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