

Results from Selected New Studies of NIET’s Impact: Cross County School District

Cross County School District’s Implementation of the TAP System

Cross County School District in Arkansas serves a rural community of about 3,600 residents with about 1,550 total households (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Cross County School District educates 600-700 students. Like many districts in rural communities, Cross County School District historically had difficulty attracting and retaining effective teachers. From 2010-11 to 2014-15, annual teacher turnover in the schools ranged from 10% to 26%, which is at or above the national annual turnover rate (Snyder et al., 2019). Cross County School District responded to the challenge by implementing practices to “grow their own” effective teachers. In 2016-17, as part of a Teacher Incentive Fund-Cycle 5 (TIF-5) grant, Cross County School District began a partnership with NIET designed to continuously raise educator excellence and student achievement through enhanced application of the TAP System.

Leutscher and Barnett (2020) examined the impact of TAP System implementation and found evidence that grants and partnerships have allowed Cross County School District to implement, maintain, and continuously improve the TAP System and leverage school, district, and NIET resources to overcome these challenges of maintaining an effective workforce. Key findings include:

Increased Teacher Effectiveness and Improved Teacher Retention: As shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4, Cross County School District has increased educator excellence, as measured by teacher observation scores (effectiveness ratings), as well as increasingly retained these teachers in the district. The percentage of effective teachers increased 19 points from 2015-16 to 2018-19 and the retention of these effective teachers rose 21 points from 2016-17 to 2019-20.

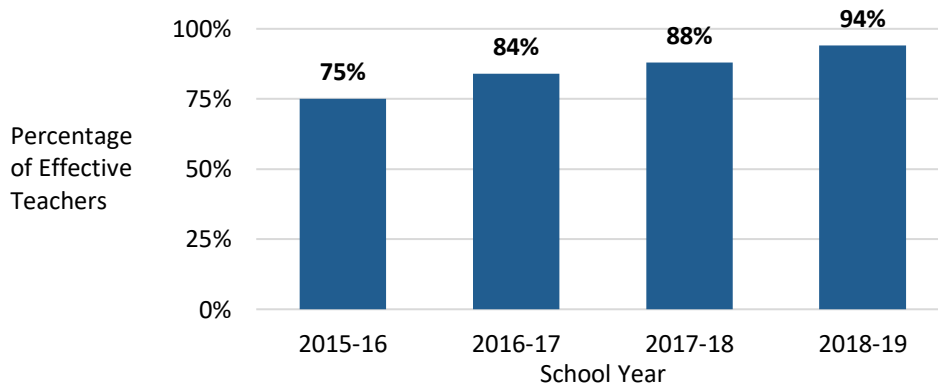


Figure 1. Cross County School District teachers improve instructional skills over time.

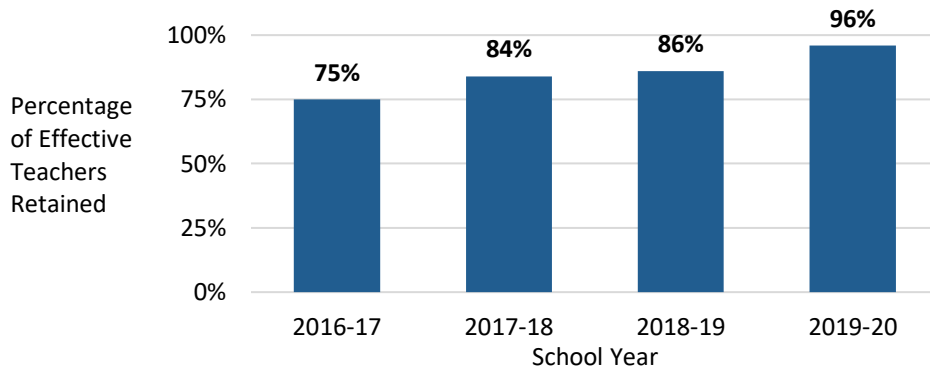


Figure 2. Cross County School District retains effective teachers over time.

Improved Student Achievement. As teachers became more effective and stayed in Cross County School District, student performance on the state assessment increased. From the year before grant implementation (2015-16¹) through the third year of the grant (2018-19), the percentage of Cross County School District students passing the state assessment increased for all tested subjects. Additionally, Figure 5 and Figure 6 compare Cross County School District with the average of comparison schools that had similar demographic characteristics and passing rates on the 2015-16 state assessment. Cross County School District began outperforming the comparison group in 2016-17 and increased or maintained the advantage over the comparison group in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

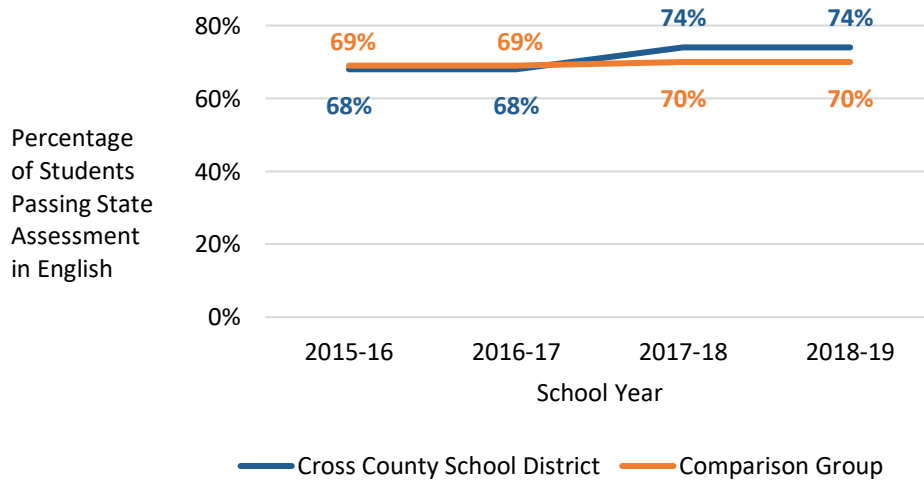


Figure 3. Cross County School District students improve performance on the English state assessment.

¹ In the 2015-16 school year, the Arkansas Board of Education adopted the ACT Aspire as the summative assessment statewide. The ACT Aspire is a series of end-of-year tests for grades 3-10 in the subject areas of English, reading, writing, math, and science.

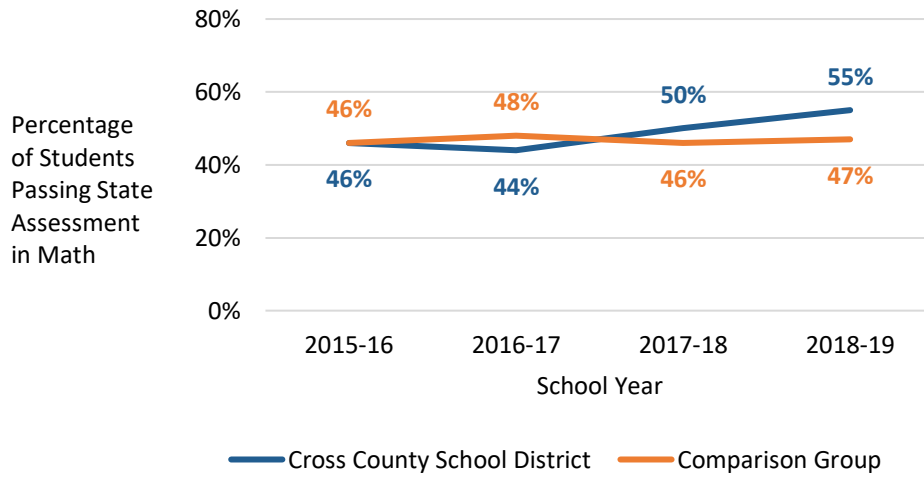


Figure 4. Cross County School District students improve performance on Math state assessment.

As a district serving a rural community, Cross County School District faces obstacles in the recruitment, development, and retention of effective educators. Through the TIF grant and partnership with NIET, Cross County School District has continuously improved to overcome these obstacles.