

TNTP's Instructional Culture Index

What is the Instructional Culture Index?

The Index is an independently-validated predictor of student performance and effective teacher retention. The power of the Index is that it is universal: it is applicable across various learning models, subjects and grades, and state lines. The Index measures talent management practices by quantifying teacher experiences and perceptions.

The Index can be considered a summative measure of a school's talent management practices. While domains and individual items within the Insight report provide feedback on specific systems that support and develop strong instruction, the Index score tells us about teachers' experience as a whole. In other words, the Index can be thought of as a school's score on an interim assessment, while individual domains show how we're doing on an assessed standard. The individual items on the survey help pinpoint the actions leaders can take within each domain to improve performance. As in the case of any effective assessment, we use carefully designed items to make it clear to school leaders where their leadership practices are strong and where they need work.

How is the Index calculated?

The Index is calculated from the % of teachers who "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with three items from the survey:

- Teachers at my school share a common vision of what effective teaching looks like.
- The expectations of effective teaching are clearly defined at my school.
- My school is committed to improving my instructional practice.

These three items are used for the Index because we have found they reliably summarize teachers' experiences of performance management practice in their schools. These questions come from distinct domains and represent essential elements for achieving exceptional instruction in every classroom; these ideas are instrumental in creating environments where good teachers become great, and where those great teachers want to work.

Index scores are reported on a scale from 1-10 based on the responses from all teachers.

How is the Index used in Insight reports?

Along with Index scores, we also provide each school's percentile ranking, indicating the % of schools with Index scores lower than the given school.

Insight reports include results in comparison to "top-quartile" schools – those schools with Index scores in the top-25% within their district or region. We provide these comparisons based on the [Positive Deviance](#) theory of social change, the belief that we can learn from the successes and practices of local exemplars who are facing similar challenges. *Through the entire Insight report, "top-quartile" **always** refers to these schools identified via their Index scores; top-quartile schools are consistent through each report, and do not vary by domain. This is done intentionally to demonstrate that schools with strong practices do not do everything incrementally better – but rather make intentional decisions about what to prioritize based on the needs of their teachers and students.*

Index scores are also calculated based on the isolated responses from teachers with stronger and weaker performance ratings, if ratings for teachers have been provided and there are four or more teachers in each group. These ratings as perceived by effectiveness groups are provided to support leaders' considerations of the experience of these groups of teachers, especially to draw attention towards the need to retain our most effective educators.

How is the Survey validated?

After each annual cycle, the Insight research team reviews our national data set to analyze each survey item, domain score and Index calculation. We examine the relationship between each item and its domain to ensure that our domains contain questions that belong together, and the relationship between each item and the Index score to ensure that the Index is a good summary measure of the survey as a whole. For individual items, we strive to maintain a range of difficulty within each domain, eliminating redundant or unhelpful items and testing new items based on emerging research and work with our partner schools across the country.

How should I use my school's Index score?

The Index is most valuable as a metric for comparing schools, and for identifying top-quartile schools to provide their aggregated results via Insight reports. When considering the Index score for an individual school, we suggest considering the Index score as an indicator of the leadership practices within the school, and then using the remainder of the provided data to flesh out the school's narrative. For example, consider trends in the school's Index relative to trends in domains or items: if the school's Index places it in or near the top-quartile, but most of all of the domains are lagging behind the top-quartile results, it may be worthwhile considering the unique challenges the school is facing, and to dig more deeply into the data to build out a complex understanding of conditions within the school.

We strongly recommend that school leaders do not place their emphasis or set goals for improvement on the Index. Because the Index is comprised of just three items, it is possible in some instances to see false positives or false negatives in the Index (scores which are inflated or deflated compared to other data from Insight results). Likewise, the three items which comprise the Index are all high-level statements, each of which may be positively or negatively impacted by several different specific leadership practices. As a result, a goal set on the Index will not point as directly to specific improvements as one set against item or domain scores. For more information on setting goals related to Insight results, please [review this document](#).