
Transfer Incentives for High-Performing Teachers: Results from a Multisite Randomized Experiment

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MATHEMATICA
Policy Research

Teacher Transfer Incentives

- Transfer incentives can be used to improve struggling schools' access to effective teachers
- The **Talent Transfer Initiative** (TTI) offers financial incentives to districts' **highest performing teachers** to **transfer to lower-achieving schools** within their districts

Research Questions

- This study examines the impact of TTI:
 - What is TTI's **impact** on **student test scores**?
 - What is TTI's **impact** on **teacher retention**?
 - Is TTI **cost-effective**?

Study Design and Implementation

Study Context

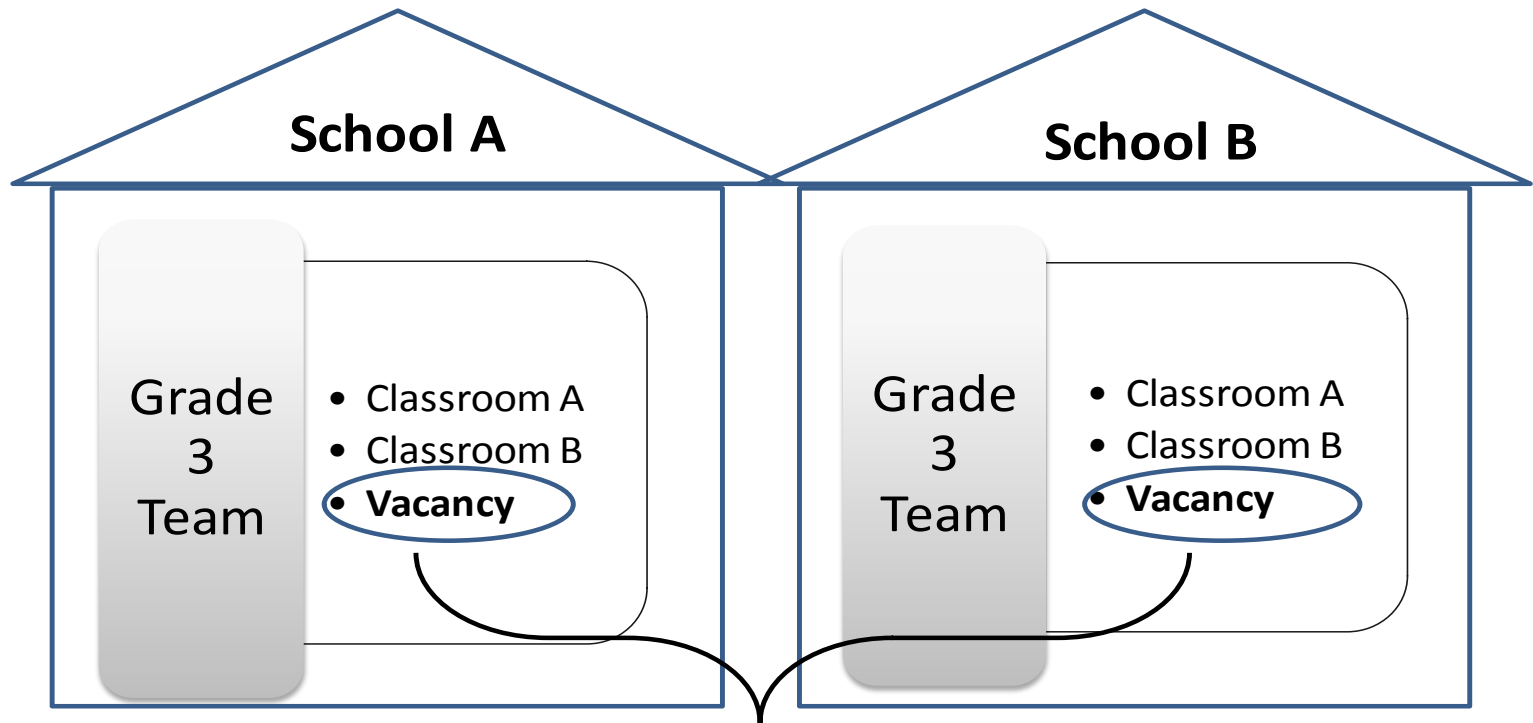
- **TTI implemented in 10 districts**
- **Large, economically diverse districts**
 - At least 40 elementary schools, at least 15 of which were high poverty
- **Grades 3-8, math and reading**

Implementing the TTI Intervention

- **Step 1: Conduct value-added analysis to identify top 20% of teachers**
- **Step 2: Identify potential receiving and sending schools based on average achievement**
- **Step 3: Identify vacancies in low-achieving schools and randomly assign teams with vacancies to treatment or control status**
- **Step 4: Match high-performing teachers to treatment vacancies through mutual consent; control vacancies filled using usual methods**

Random Assignment Design

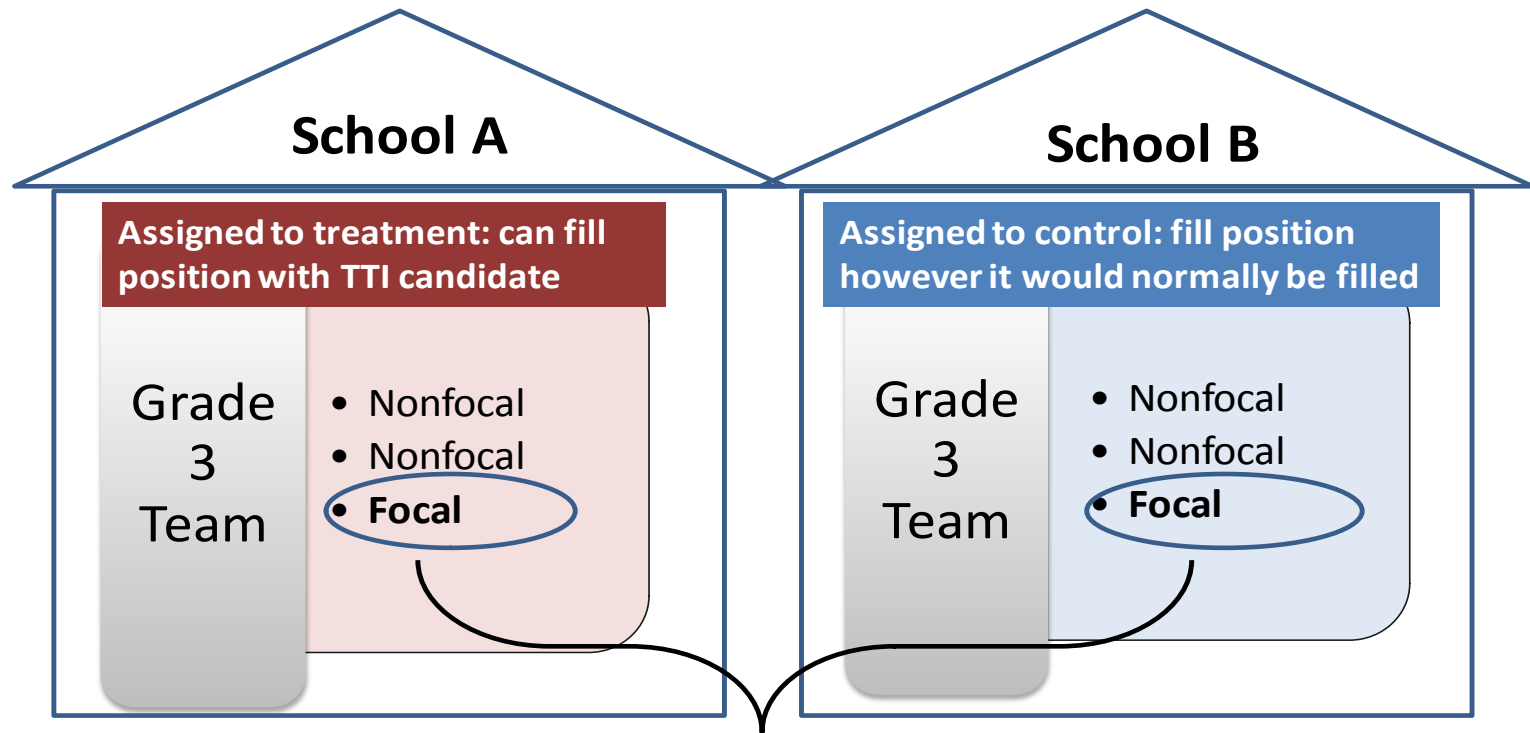
Before Random Assignment



Schools are paired if they have a vacancy in the same grade/subject.

Random Assignment Design

After Random Assignment

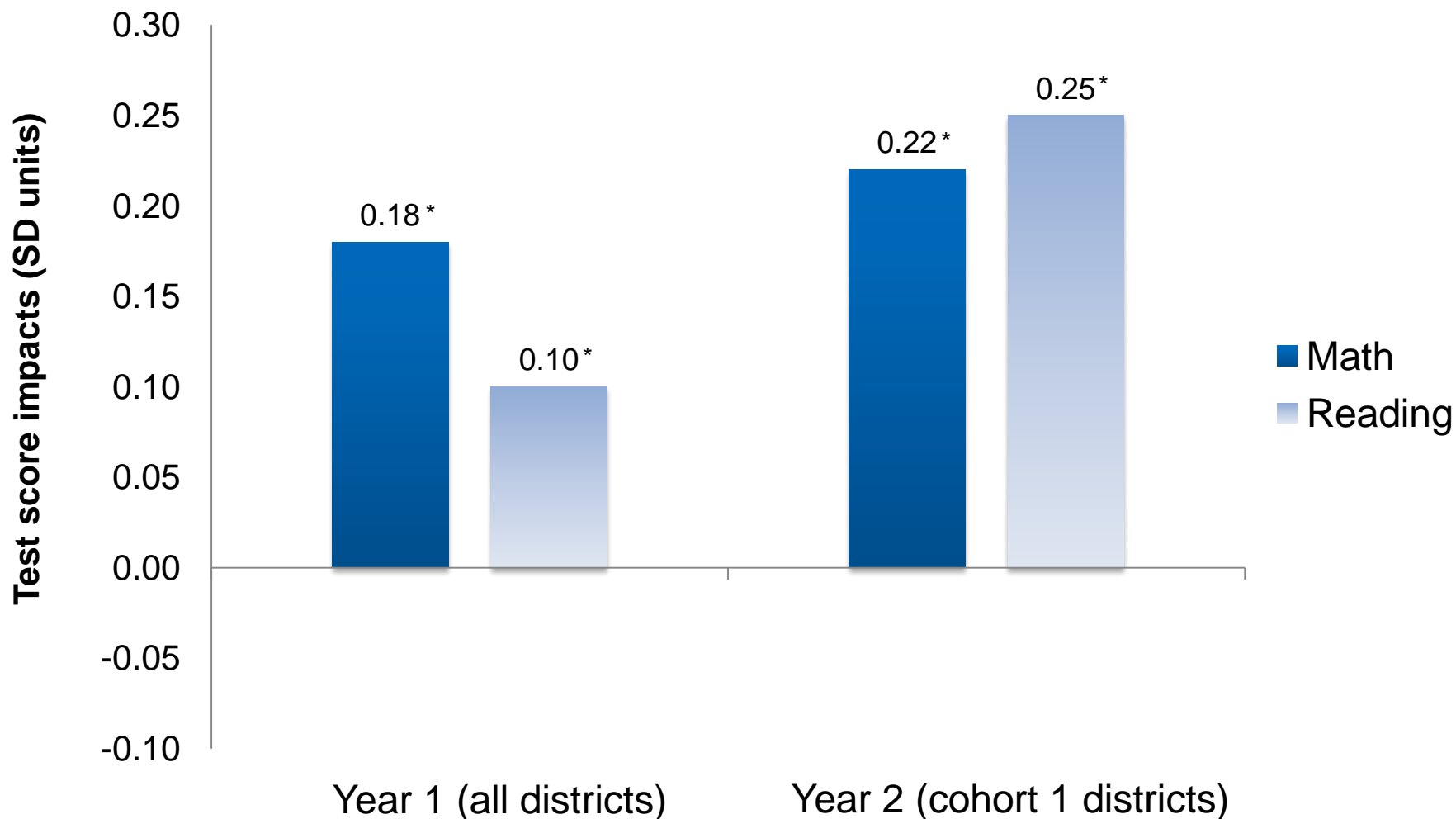


Whoever fills the vacant position is the “focal teacher.” The other teachers are nonfocal.

Impacts on Student Achievement



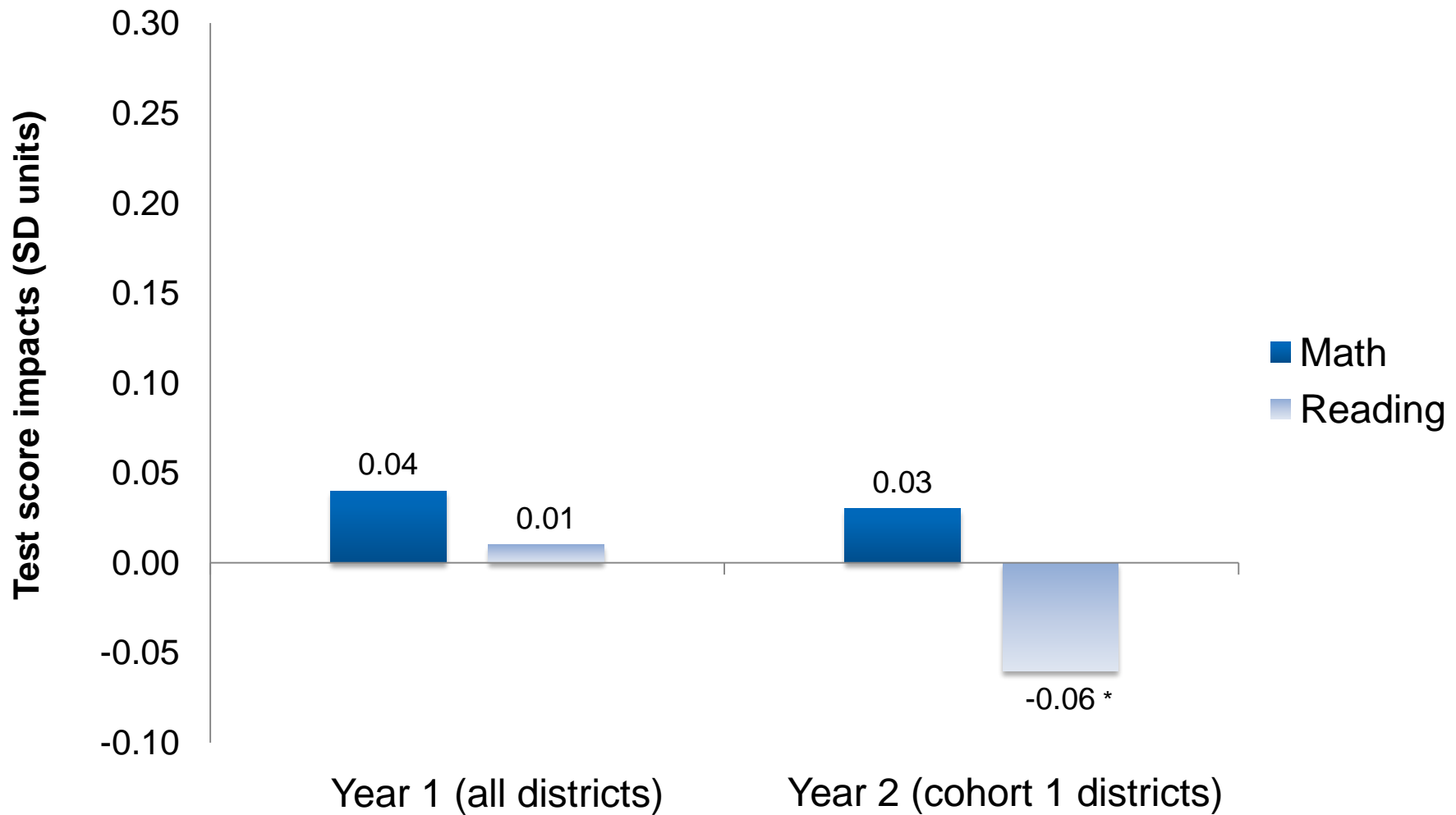
TTI Elementary Teachers Had Positive Impacts on Test Scores



* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test.



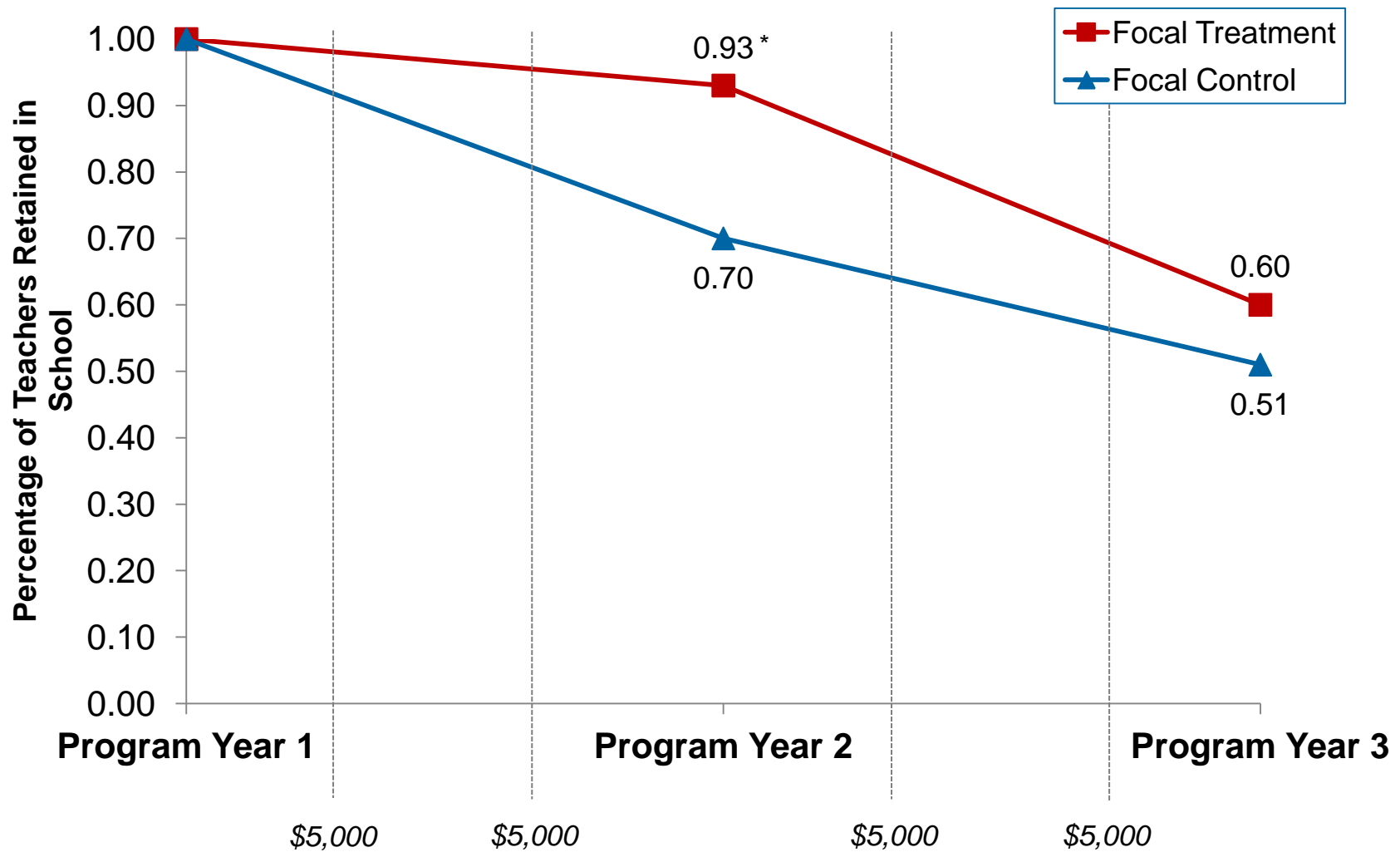
Did Not Find Evidence That TTI Was Effective in Middle Schools



* Statistically significant at the 0.05 level, two-tailed test.

Impacts on Teacher Retention

TTI Teachers Were Retained at Higher Rates During the Intervention, and the Same After



Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

Cost-Effectiveness of TTI

- Took perspective of an area superintendent responsible for low-performing schools
- **How much** would the district have to spend to **generate the same impact through a different program?**
 - We used class-size reduction as a point of comparison¹
- Under most scenarios, **TTI is the cheaper option**
 - Cost savings from TTI could be more than \$7,000 per teaching team
 - Cost savings are more than \$13,000 for elementary teams

¹Mosteller (1995).

Conclusions About Impact of TTI

- **Targeted teacher transfer incentives may be a promising approach to improve student test scores in struggling schools, at least in elementary schools**
- **We did not find evidence of impacts in middle school, and impacts varied across districts**
- **More research is needed on why transfer incentives are more effective in certain contexts**

Questions