



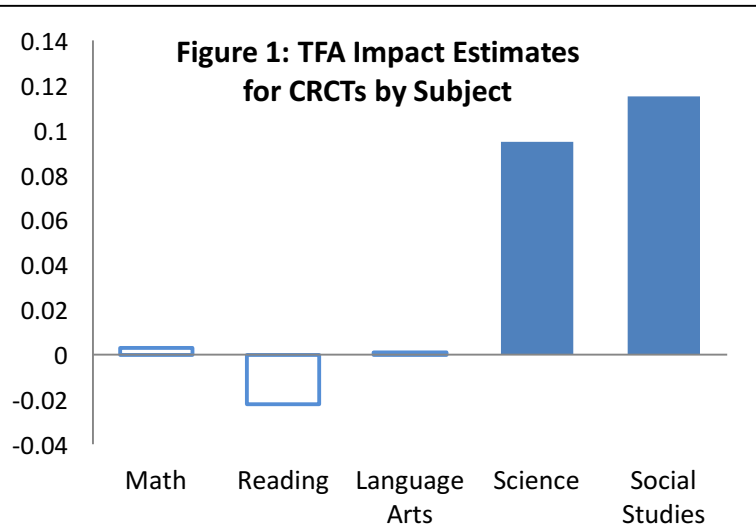
## Performance Estimates of Teach For America Teachers in Atlanta Metropolitan Area School Districts

### Executive Summary

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**Background:** Teach For America (TFA) is an alternative certification program that intensively recruits and selects recent college graduates and mid-career professionals to teach in schools serving high-need students. TFA has been placing corps members in schools in the Atlanta metropolitan area since 2000. Since then, a cumulative total of over 3,000 corps members have been placed in schools in the region. Most are teaching in the region's highest poverty, lowest performing classrooms.

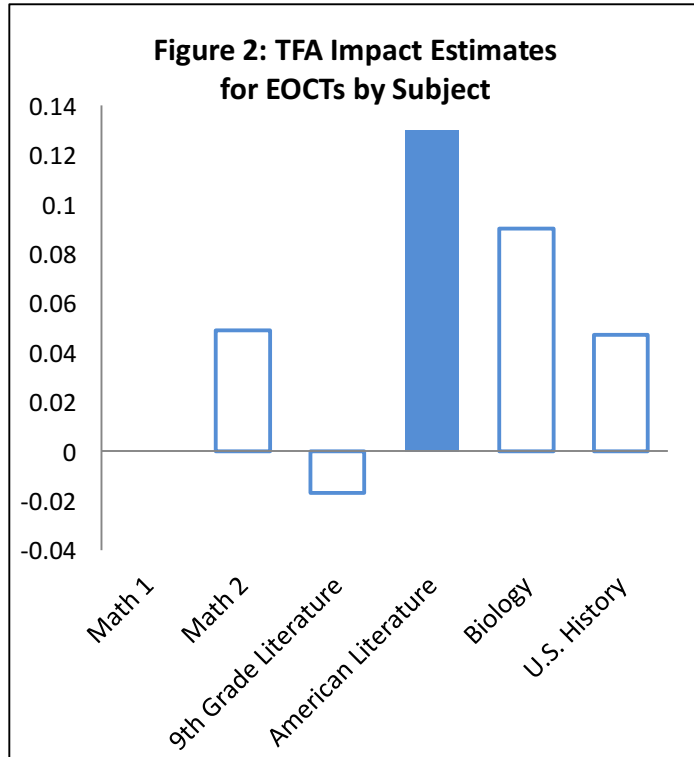
Prior rigorous evaluations of TFA have generally found positive impacts of TFA teachers on student learning in math and science and no significant differences in reading or language arts, compared to similarly experienced non-TFA teachers in the same schools. This study, the first to focus specifically on TFA impacts in the Atlanta region, finds that hiring TFA teachers in these school districts has been associated with net increases in student learning.



Note: Bar heights represent TFA impact estimates in units of student standard deviations of achievement. Solid bars represent statistically significant estimates. CRCT refers to the Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

**Research Question:** How does the learning of students taught by TFA teachers in the Atlanta region compare with that of similarly experienced non-TFA teachers' students?

**Data:** Longitudinal administrative data were obtained from three major school districts in the Atlanta region with significant numbers of recent TFA placements: Atlanta Public Schools, Clayton County Public Schools, and Gwinnett County Public Schools. The data span the 2005-06 through 2013-14 school years, though the span of available data varies across districts.



Note: Bar heights represent TFA impact estimates in units of student standard deviations of achievement. Solid bars represent statistically significant estimates.

**Outcome Measures:** The outcome of interest is student learning based on two series of state standardized tests: Georgia's end-of-grade tests (the CRCTs) for students in grades 3 through 8; and end-of-course tests (the EOCTs), for courses commonly taken during high school.

**Methods:** Student test scores are predicted in a value-added framework affording statistical control for prior test scores, student and classroom variables, and teacher experience. The preferred approach uses additional school-level controls to create within-school comparisons of TFA and non-TFA teachers' performance, thus isolating the impact of a TFA teacher (including active corps members and alumni).

**Key Findings:** We find evidence of a positive impact on student learning in select tested subjects due to the hiring of TFA teachers in these three districts. TFA effects are positive and statistically significant in social studies and science on the state CRCTs (see Figure 1), and in American Literature on the state EOCTs (see Figure 2). These TFA effects, similar in magnitude to those found in relevant prior studies, are educationally significant. We find no evidence that TFA teachers perform any differently than non-TFA teachers in all other subjects that were analyzed.

Supplementary analyses show these results are not sensitive to the inclusion of data from a period of well-documented test score manipulation in Atlanta Public Schools, though the statistical significance of the EOCT estimates in American Literature is not entirely consistent across these specifications.