

Evaluation of Teach For America: Lessons from a Randomized Field Trial in Education

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MATHEMATICA
Policy Research, Inc.

Motivation for Studying TFA

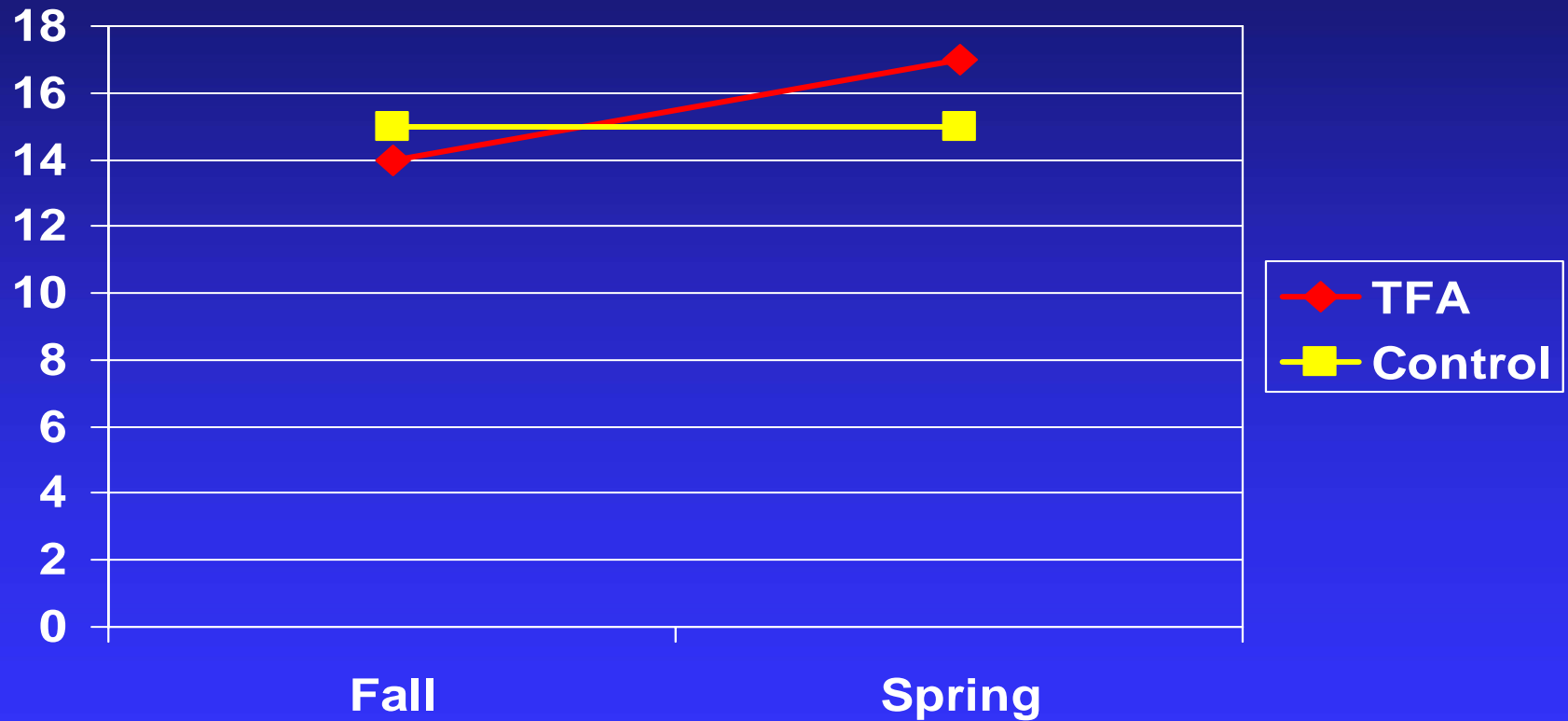
- **Unique approach to teacher recruitment/preparation**
- **Widespread criticism of approach**
- **Existing evidence is limited**
- **TFA is expanding rapidly**
- **Larger debate about alternative teacher routes**

Design of Mathematica's Study

- Measure the overall impact of TFA
- Compare achievement of elementary students taught by TFA and control teachers *at the same grades in the same schools*
- National sample of TFA schools
- Randomly assign students to teachers—replicated “mini-experiments”
- Focus primarily on standardized test scores

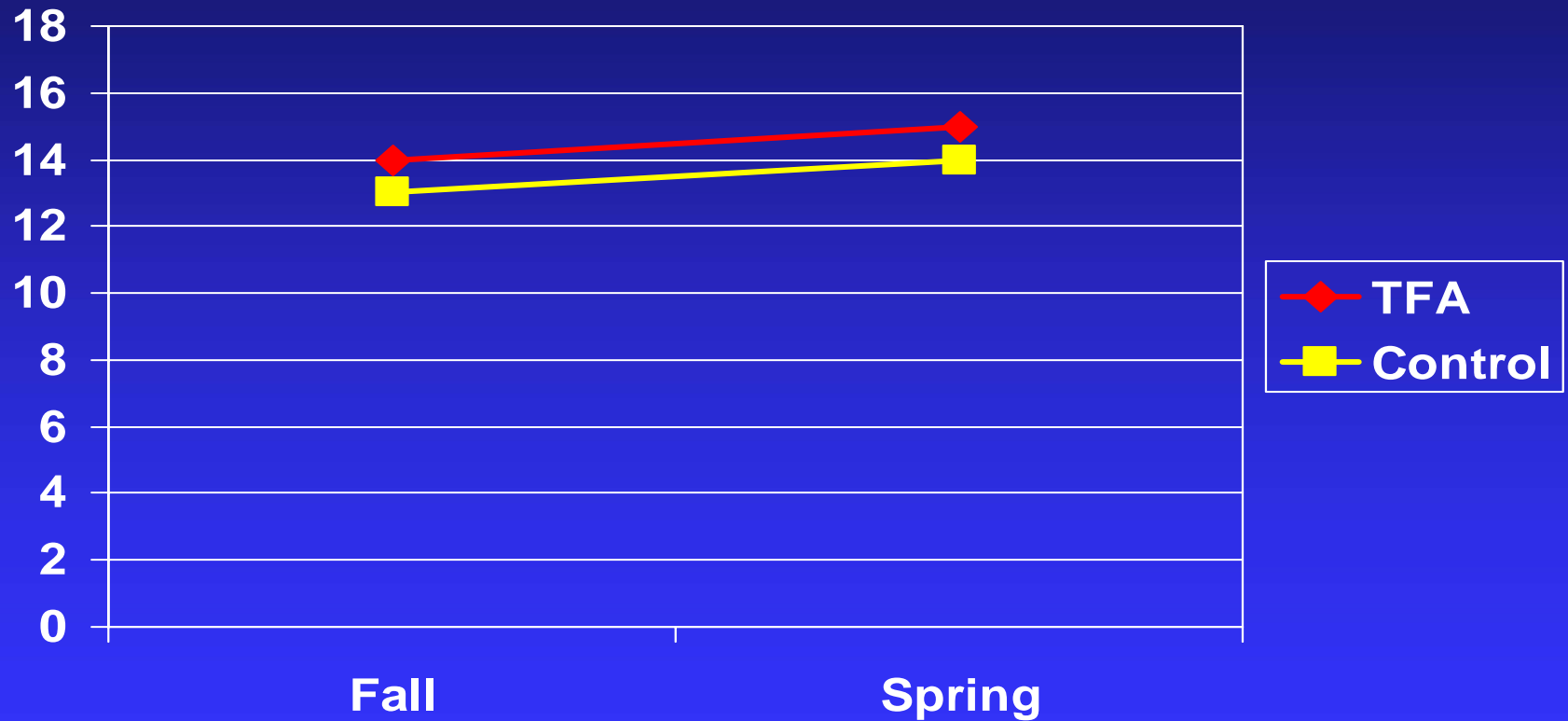
Positive Impact on Math

Percentile



No Impact on Reading

Percentile



Teacher Subgroups: Same Story

- **Experience**
 - Novice, veteran controls
 - First-year TFAs, second-year TFAs
- **Certification**
 - Certified, non-certified controls

How Does the MPR Study Compare to Other TFA Evaluations?

- Random assignment
- Within-school comparisons
- National
- Objectivity of the evaluator

Other Impact Studies

- **CREDO (Raymond, Fletcher, and Luque 2001)**
– Houston
- **ASU (Lazcko-Kerr and Berliner 2002)**
– One district in Arizona

What Effect Did the MPR Study Have on Policy?

- **Changed the nature of the TFA debate**
- **Influenced TFA program's self improvement**
- **District partners and funders?**

What Counts as Evidence?

- **Internal validity**
 - Randomized design
 - Quasi-experimental design
- **External validity**
 - Replication in many areas, typical areas and conditions
- **Face validity, credibility**
 - Large sample size
 - Peer review
 - Objectivity of the researcher
 - Stakeholder buy-in