

Early Childhood Education: 2004-2005

REIS05-158-4

At a Glance

The Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program is a state-of-the-art, research-based program that is built on current research methodologies and best practices. The program is maintained at every campus that serves PK-3 students. The ECE Department has an ongoing collaboration with the Reading and Multi-language Enrichment Departments to ensure that all students read on grade level or higher by the end of the third grade as required by the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Program strength was supported by the distribution of a Model for Success best practices guide to all schools by the Early Childhood Department. The model used balanced whole group and small group instruction for various instructional content. Best practices included a diagnostic and prescriptive approach to teaching, a program facilitator at each campus, emphasis on small group and individualized instruction, a comprehensive program that included curriculum guides and supporting materials, appropriate staffing, increased parent involvement and training and a strong emphasis on mastery of essential skills by the end of the third grade. Students were to have access to a variety of learning and discovery centers and places for independent practice or differentiated tasks.

Student Demographics

A total of 59,635 students were provided ECE services at 143 campuses. Preschool services were provided to 7,071 PK students who were (a) eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch, (b) limited English proficient, or (c) eligible for homeless services. Across all grade levels, 83% of students served were disadvantaged. Almost half (49%) of the students in Grades PK-3 were limited English proficient. To address the needs of these students, ECE's goal was to allow speakers of other languages to learn and progress in their primary language in all content areas while learning the second language. Of the total population, 69% were Hispanic, 26% were Black, and <7% were

White, American Indian, and Asian students (Table 1).

Table 1

Percent of Students Enrolled in ECE by Grade and Ethnicity

Grade	B	A	H	AI	W
PK	22	1	75	<1	2
K	25	1	69	<1	4
1	26	1	68	<1	5
2	27	1	67	<1	5
3	27	1	67	<1	5
Total	26	1	69	<1	5

Best Practices

Principals and campus facilitators were surveyed. Results from these surveys indicated that *TPRI/Tejas Lee*, teacher-made tests, and teacher observations were the most often used diagnostic and prescriptive measures employed by the ECE teachers. Assessment data were most frequently used to identify individual growth, form small groups, and reteach.

Both principals and campus facilitators reported that sufficient reading, mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum guides and supporting materials were available for all teachers. Student teacher ratios were under the district's goal of 22:1 in Grades PK-3. Students in PK and Kindergarten spent more time in small group instruction than those in Grades 2 and 3. Various learning centers were utilized in Early Childhood classrooms. The most frequently found centers included the classroom library, writing, computers, mathematics manipulatives, and phonics/reading games.

Principals and teachers were active in increasing parental involvement. Methods included conducting parent meetings and workshops, holding PTA meetings and Open Houses, writing notes to parents, recruiting classroom volunteers, and making personal contacts. The topics most frequently presented in parent training sessions included "Tips to help children learn at home," "Parenting and the

importance of parent involvement,” and also “Information about PK-3 curriculum.”

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

Across all grade levels, with the exception of Grades 2 and 3 (reading), students scored slightly above the mean of 50 for reading and mathematics (Table 2). Kindergarten students scored the highest among grade levels, well above the mean of 50 for both reading (68.53) and mathematics (63.72). Grades 2 and 3 scored below the mean of 50 in reading.

Logramos

Table 2 shows that students in Grades K-2 had mean scores above 50 in reading (63.39, 63.09, and 68.81, respectively). Mathematics scores were also above 50 across all grade levels (69.54, 62.81, 69.08 and 61.53, respectively).

Table 2

ITBS and Logramos NCE Scores by Grade, 2005

<i>ITBS</i>		
Grade	Reading	Mathematics
KN	68.53	63.72
1	50.96	50.23
2	47.93	52.53
3	45.40	54.54
<i>Logramos</i>		
Grade	Reading	Mathematics
KN	63.39	69.54
1	63.09	62.81
2	68.81	69.08
3	57.95	61.53

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

A high percentage of Grade 3 students passed both the reading and mathematics portions of the TAKS test (Table 3). Across all ethnicities, 84% passed reading and 71% passed mathematics. Seventy-nine (79%) of limited English speaking students passed the reading and 66% passed the mathematics tests.

Table 3

Percent of Grade 3 Students Passing TAKS Reading and Mathematics by Demographic Variables

Variable	Reading	Mathematics
African American	84.3	67.1
Hispanic	83.3	71.3
White	92.3	88.8
Total	84.0	71.0
Other Variables		
Limited English	79.0	66.2
Disadvantaged	82.8	69.6
Special Education	73.2	55.5

Note. “Total” does not include other ethnicities. Reading results include the February and April test administrations.

Recommendations

- The school administration should provide greater encouragement, resources, and training opportunities to reading teachers at Grades 2 and 3. This would allow teachers the opportunity to create a more positive working environment in the classroom that could result in greater student achievement.
- The administration should encourage the Early Childhood Education program to develop more innovative parent training strategies that result in an increase in parent involvement.
- The administration should continue to support the “Model for Success” best practices initiative and encourage even greater student access and participation in classroom libraries, writing centers, and computer centers.