

# Final Evaluation of the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant: 2004-05

REIS05-171-4

## At a Glance

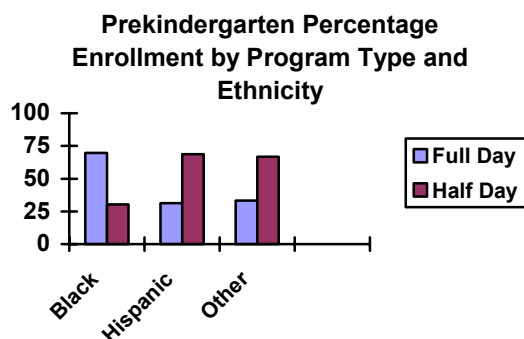
**P**rekindergarten programs are implemented by Local Education Agencies based on state law and the guidelines of the Texas Education Agency. Schools districts must offer programs if they have 15 or more eligible 4-year olds. Districts may apply to TEA for grants to expand existing half day prekindergarten or kindergarten programs to full day or establish prekindergarten programs at additional campuses. The programs are designed to develop skills necessary for success in the regular public school curriculum, with a focus on pre-reading, language, and mathematics.

### Budget

Cycle 10 (2004-05) of the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant provided funding in the amount of \$4,795,992. The grant was administered by the district's Early Childhood Department.

### Prekindergarten Enrollment and Staffing

The district offered full day prekindergarten in 66 schools in 2004-05, up from 17 schools during the first grant year, 1999-00. Student enrollment in 2004-05 was 7,198, a slight decrease from last year. About 40% of the students were served in full day programs. Three-fourths of the students were Hispanic. Overall 57% were Limited English Proficient and 91% were from economically deprived families. The chart below shows enrollment by ethnicity and program type. Black students were more likely to be served in full day programs than either Hispanic or Other students.



The majority of the 264 prekindergarten teachers were female (29 male teachers). Three major ethnic groups, Black, Hispanic and White accounted for most prekindergarten teachers; almost 55% were Hispanic. There were 235 teacher aides, who were to act as co-teachers, taking an active role in classroom activities. All but five of the aides were female. Sixty-five percent were Hispanic, followed by 30% Black and 5% White.

### Prekindergarten Program Description

The full day and half day prekindergartens included bilingual, ESL (English as a Second Language) and regular education classrooms. The Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) was implemented as the foundation of the curriculum, with Building Language to Literacy (BLL) as the ESL component and Scholastic Early Childhood Program as the State adoption. LEAP meets the requirements of the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines. Full day and half day programs followed similar schedules in terms of daily activities and curriculum, with full day programs providing more time on task and a brief rest time. Curricular activities included meeting and greeting, LEAP, Math/Science/Social Studies, learning center work time, music/movement, journal writing, outdoor learning, reading/rest, small group activities, storytime/read aloud, songs, poems, review and dismissal. Classrooms were configured to incorporate learning centers. Schools exercised some flexibility in implementing the schedule, in accordance with site-based management. The Early Childhood Department provided teachers with a syllabus and a scope and sequence that supplied details, by week of required content, instructional tools, instructional methods, suggested teaching time and assessment methods.

### Early Childhood Department Prekindergarten Program Support

The district's Early Childhood Department devoted many resources to support prekindergarten

program implementation. Training and assistance in LEAP implementation was ongoing throughout the year. The district continued active participation in DallasKids, the early childhood reading collaborative headed by the Foundation for Community Empowerment. In addition, the Early Childhood Department managed the Together We Succeed grant, funded by the Communities Foundation of Texas. This grant supported a partnership with Head Start of Greater Dallas to supplement LEAP implementation and kindergarten transition for students in the East Dallas Head Start Center and the four DISD schools which many of the Head Start students ultimately attend.

### Coaching and Mentoring Program

The Early Childhood Department continued its association with SMU, with financial support from the Dallas Foundation, to facilitate LEAP implementation with a coaching and mentoring program. This highly successful program provided many benefits for prekindergarten teachers and students. Mentors participated in monthly LEAP training provided through the Early Childhood Department and SMU, and monthly training and meetings with Early Childhood specialists. Mentors planned and provided periodic training for teachers. Mentor teacher's classrooms were used as demonstration classrooms. Mentors modeled LEAP lessons and offered assistance to teachers. Coaches were part-time district employees, experts in early childhood classroom education, who were not currently teaching in their own classrooms. They observed prekindergarten teachers, modeled LEAP lessons, helped with training and provided assistance upon teacher request. Coaches met monthly with Early Childhood and LEAP personnel from SMU, serving as the primary liaison between Early Childhood specialists and mentor teachers.

### Prekindergarten Outcomes

An on-line survey of principals in schools with prekindergarten indicated that principals now perceive the curricular focus of prekindergarten as prereading, language, and vocabulary skills.

Prekindergarten students were tested in the fall and spring with the *Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning (DIAL-3)*. The table below shows fall and spring *DIAL-3* mean NCE scores. Scores were reported for 6,265 students

on the fall assessment, and 6,680 students on the spring assessment.

*DIAL-3* Mean NCE Scores

Test	Fall		Spring	
	Mean NCE	Std. Dev.	Mean NCE	Std. Dev.
Motor	44.06	23.696	80.21	18.301
Concept	23.16	19.454	52.13	22.306
Lang.	20.95	19.680	52.95	25.126
Total	25.17	19.781	64.07	23.097

DISD prekindergarten students scored very low on the fall administration of the *DIAL-3*. Fall mean NCE scores for *DIAL-3* total translated to the 12th percentile rank (PR). DISD students scored better than only 12 percent of students in the *DIAL-3* norming group, and 88% of students scored better than DISD students. However, spring administration scores showed much improvement for DISD prekindergarten students. On the *DIAL-3* total, the district overall mean NCE of 64.07 translated to the 75th percentile. In language, a strong focus of the district's prekindergarten program, mean NCE fall scores placed DISD students in the 8th percentile within the norm group, while the spring mean NCE showed DISD students had moved to the 55th percentile among their norm group peers.

By the spring administration of the test, DISD students appeared to be no more at risk academically than the norm group. These results reflect quite favorably on the district's prekindergarten program.

Prekindergarten attendance rates for 2004-05 were similar for full day and half day programs. The overall district prekindergarten attendance rate was 95.8%, with full day schools reporting 95.8% and half day schools reporting 95.7%.