

Final Evaluation of the Learning Centers: 2005-06

EA06-155-4

At a Glance

The Learning Centers were court-ordered efforts to provide quality educational programs for disadvantaged children. Upon release from the *Tasby v. Moses* desegregation order the district adopted a Declaration of Commitments and Covenants that states its desires to maintain certain programs and policies formerly mandated by that order. The Learning Centers is one of several programs that are included in the district's Declaration of Commitments and Covenants.

The Learning Centers offer a unique combination of programs and staffing including: (a) reduced pupil-teacher ratio, (b) extended school day, (c) extensive before/after school programs, (d) increased pay for teachers, (e) specially selected and trained teachers and administrators, (f) additional mathematics and reading instruction, (g) on-going staff development activities for faculty members, (h) summer staff development for new faculty members, (i) Learning Center management council, and (j) special incentives.

Student Demographics

The 14 intermediate and two middle Learning Centers enrolled 4,464 students, as compared to 4,501 students for 2004-05. Fifty-five percent of all Learning Center students were African American, 44% were Hispanic, and less than 2% were from other ethnic groups, including White, Asian, and Native American. Districtwide, 31% of Grades 4-8 students were African American and 62% were Hispanic.

Total enrollment in the Learning Centers decreased about 6% (319 students) over the last three years, while district enrollment over the same time period decreased approximately 3%. The general trend is that African American enrollment decreased while Hispanic enrollment increased. Overall, the Learning Centers served the same percentage of district students over the last two years.

Teacher Demographics

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the middle Learning Center teachers were African American, 5% were Hispanic and 24% were of other ethnicities. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the middle Learning Center teachers were female and 44% male. Intermediate Learning Center teacher ethnicities were 64% African American, 10% Hispanic, and 26% other ethnicities. The percentage of African American teachers was higher in Learning Centers compared to the rest of the district, while the percentage of Hispanic teachers was lower. School year 2005-06 had the highest percentage of Hispanic teachers since the beginning of the Learning Centers and the lowest percent of teachers of Other ethnicities

Budget

In 2004-05, pre-approved direct cost allocations totaled approximately \$20.3 million, or approximately \$0.9 million more than direct cost allocations of \$20.2 million budgeted for 2003-04. Pre-approved indirect cost allocations totaled \$1.6 million, approximately \$30,000 more than the allocation for 2003-04. Total allocated costs for 2004-05 were \$21.8 million. Campus allocations averaged \$4,301 per pupil for 2004-05. Campus expenditures averaged \$4,080 per pupil. However, per-pupil allocations varied by campus, as noted in past years.

Class Size

The class size goal for the Learning Centers is a maximum pupil-teacher ratio of 20:1, with a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 18:1. Of 208 non-special education intermediate Learning Center classes, 14, or 7%, were larger than 18 and only 2 classes, or 1%, exceeded 20 students. The average intermediate Learning Center school class size, was 15 students per class. Ten middle Learning Center classes (3%) exceeded the cap of 20 students per class. The majority of middle Learning Center classes in the eight core courses had enrollments of less than 18 students. Overall,

the average Learning Center middle school class size, across eight subject areas, was 15 students per class.

Incentive and Supplemental Pay

The incentive and supplemental pay currently being implemented by the Learning Centers include (a) an administrative incentive of \$3,600 for principals and \$3,000 for deans and assistant principals, (b) a signing incentive of up to \$1,500 for professional staff, (c) a re-sign incentive of up to \$500, (d) before/after school program supplemental pay of \$20 per hour, and (e) extra pay for the added 45 minutes in the instructional day for Learning Center teachers (\$20 per hour) and counselors (\$1,500 per year). The Learning Centers also have a performance incentive pay goal system. This plan provides for both student attendance goals and academic goals. In order to achieve the academic and student attendance goals, a school must fall within the top 25% of all schools at each grade level in each goal area. The percent of pay incentive goals attained increased from 29% in 2003-04 to 33% in 2004-05. The largest increase in the percent of incentive goals attained was for Student Attendance. The largest decrease in percent of incentive goals attained was in TAKS Writing.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Learning Center students exceeded district passing levels on all TAKS tests at Grades 4, 5, and 6. At Grade 7, district students outperformed Learning Center students on the TAKS Reading and Mathematics tests, while Learning Center students outperformed other district students on the TAKS Writing test. Grade 8 Learning Center students were outperformed by other district students on the TAKS Reading and Social Studies tests, while outperforming other district students on the TAKS Mathematics test. Intermediate Learning Center students outperformed other district students on the TAKS Reading test. Seventy-two percent (72%) of Grade 4 Learning Center students, 87% of Grade 5 Learning Center students, and 93% of Grade 6 Learning Center students met standard in reading. The percent of Learning Centers students passing the TAKS Reading test from 2005 to 2006 increased by 6.2% at Grade 4, 10.9% at Grade 5 and 13.3% at Grade 6.

Middle Learning Center students were outperformed by other district students on the TAKS Reading test. Edison had a higher percentage of students passing the TAKS Reading test than did Anderson at Grades 7 and 8.

Intermediate Learning Center students outperformed other district students on the TAKS Mathematics test. Eighty-two percent (82%) of Grade 4 Learning Center students, 82% of Grade 5 Learning Center students, and 83% of Grade 6 Learning Center students met standard in mathematics. The percent of Learning Center students passing the TAKS Mathematics test from 2005 to 2006 increased by 10.0% at Grade 4, 7.3% at Grade 5 and 11.5% at Grade 6. Middle Learning Center students were outperformed by other district students at Grade 7, while Learning Center students outperformed district students at Grade 8, on the TAKS Mathematics test. The percent of Grade 7 students passing increased by 0.4%, while Grade 8 Learning Center students showed an increase of 6.4% on the TAKS mathematics test. Edison had a higher percent of students who met standard on the TAKS Mathematics test than did Anderson at Grades 7 and 8.

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills

Analyses of variance revealed an overall significant difference between the Learning Center students and other district students on adjusted mean NCE Reading Comprehension scores, for Grades 4-6 combined. Analyses revealed that differences were due primarily to high NCE scores at Dade. Analyses of variance revealed an overall significant difference between the Learning Centers and other district students on the ITBS Mathematics Total for Grades 4-6. Analyses revealed that differences were due primarily to high NCE scores at Dunbar and Rhoads.

Analyses of variance revealed no significant differences, at the .01 probability level, between the Learning Center schools and other district students on the Reading Comprehension and Mathematics Total subtests across Grades 7-8.

Recommendation

Based on the findings from this evaluation, the following recommendation is made:

- All 4-5 Learning Centers should become K-5 Learning Centers.