

Report to the Superintendent on the Declaration of the Commitment and Covenants: Academic Programs 2006-07

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EA07-164-4

At- a- Glance

Early Childhood Education

Commitment 3

The Dallas Independent School District shall maintain a strong Early Childhood Program at each campus that includes PK-3 students. This program shall be based on current educational best practices, including but not limited to a diagnostic and prescriptive approach, a program facilitator at each campus which includes PK-3 students, emphasis on small group and individualized instruction, a comprehensive program that includes 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 level.

Status

The district maintained a strong Early Childhood education program in 139 schools. The program served a predominantly disadvantaged population from ages zero to five. Due to budget cuts, program facilitators were eliminated. However, a new position (Parental Involvement and Outreach Specialist) was established. The program continued to use many of the best practices outlined in the Model for Success best practices guide, with the addition of tiered professional development and the development of small professional PK Learning Communities. Likewise, the program continued to use traditional parental involvement activities such as HIPPY, parent conferences and parent training, with the addition of virtual PK classrooms and virtual PK Open House. The most commonly used diagnostic and prescriptive measures continued to be Dial 3, *TPRI/Tejas Lee*, and teacher-made and benchmark tests. The overall TAKS passing rate for grade 3 students was 85% in reading and 70% in mathematics indicating mastery of essential skills by the end of third grade by most students (Figures 1 & 2).

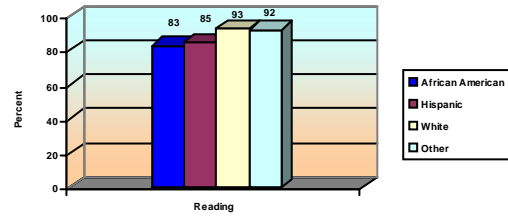


Figure 1. A comparison of grade 3 passing rates on the TAKS Reading test by ethnicity.

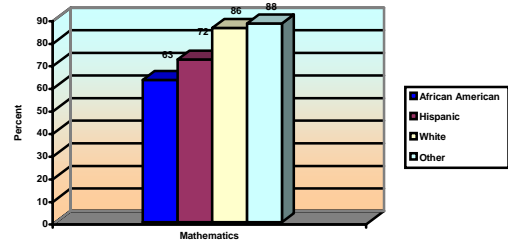


Figure 2. A comparison of grade 3 passing rates on the TAKS Mathematics test by ethnicity.

Magnet Schools

Commitment 5

The Dallas Independent School District shall maintain a program of magnet schools, including Montessori schools. The program shall offer unique educational opportunities through specialty curricula that cannot be found within the neighborhood schools. The program shall include the vanguards, academies, and high schools designated as magnet schools or Montessori schools at the date the district is released from supervision of the Court. The district shall maintain the Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center as a center for high school magnet programs. The district shall be diligent in its efforts to identify all eligible or qualified students, and to encourage parents and students to

participate in the programs. It shall be the policy of the district that properly identified students shall be served without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender or religion. The district shall carefully monitor the selection process so that no student or ethnic group is unfairly excluded. The district shall no less frequently than every three years evaluate all magnet and Montessori programs to determine appropriateness of the program, potential need for additional programs, and the degree to which the programs are ethnically diverse. Nothing herein shall limit the ability of the Board of Trustees to add additional programs or to modify or eliminate existing programs in accordance with the recommendations of the district's evaluation. Criteria for determining whether programs should be added, modified or eliminated shall be included in the initial Special External Magnet Evaluation. The district shall maintain an advisory committee for each high school magnet school that will include specialists in the particular focus of the individual magnet school.

Status

The district maintained 10 magnet high schools (six at the Yvonne Ewell Townview Center), 9 academy middle schools, 7 vanguard elementary schools, 2 Montessori schools, each having academy and vanguard programs, and a career development center at Skyline CDC. The program saw administrative changes that included the transformation of the Irma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School by adding grade 10, closure of M. Jackson, opening of Darrell Vanguard, movement of grade six Academy students to Vanguards, except at Montessori schools, decentralization of administrative oversight and a shift in accountability of magnet principals to the Area Superintendents. All schools offered unique curricula not offered in neighborhood schools and all magnet high schools had an advisory committee comprised of professionals in the school's specialty. The program continued the use of a review committee to determine students' eligibility while seats were awarded on a 70/30 split (30% districtwide and 70% within each Area. The magnet program served an ethnically diverse predominately disadvantaged population with an enrollment of 9,018 students (52% Hispanic, 33% African American, 12% White and 3% Asian and Native Americans). Of these, about 1% was LEP. There was a slight decrease in funding from \$40,872,481 in 2005-06 to \$40,066,370 in 2006-07.

Magnet students continued to score higher passing and commended rates on the TAKS Reading,

Mathematics and Writing tests than their district counterparts. All magnets received favorable AEIS ratings: Exemplary (7), Recognized (12) and Acceptable (7).

The magnet selection process continues to be an issue of great concern. Presently, LEP and other student groups (those with disabilities and those below the 40th percentile) are still underrepresented in the program. A review of magnet enrollment indicated about 1% of the total magnet enrollment was comprised of LEP students. The selection process should be modified such that admission to certain programs/vocations will be less dependent on achievement based on language proficiency and more on other skills and aptitudes associated with success. For example, certain vocations at the Skyline CDC should be reviewed for appropriateness.

Gifted and Talented

Commitment 6

The Dallas Independent School District shall maintain programs for gifted and talented students in all elementary, middle, and high schools in accordance with the requirements of State law. The district shall be diligent in its efforts to identify all eligible or qualified students, and to encourage parents and students to participate in the programs. It shall be the policy of the district that properly identified students shall be served without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender or religion. The district affirms the importance of encouraging and including ethnic minority students in high academic programs and courses. The district shall carefully monitor the selection process so that no student or ethnic group is unfairly excluded.

Status

The district maintained a Gifted and Talented program in all elementary, middle, and high schools in accordance with State law. The program consisted of three components: (1) the Gifted and Talented Program (G/T) (grades Kindergarten through fifth); (2) the G/T Seminar (grades seven and eight) and a G/T elective class for grade six middle school students; and (3) Advanced Placement Courses (grades seven through 12). Students gained admission to the program in two ways; (1) test scores and (2) a recommendation by a teacher, parent, administrator, peer, or community member. Selection, or placement in the program, was made by an ARE Committee of at least three local school educators who had received Gifted and Talented training. The program served a

predominately disadvantaged population (Hispanic and African American).

Actions taken to encourage parental involvement included parent and community training, advertising in local newspapers, and a program website. Other more traditional activities included parent conferences, PTA meetings, Open House, classroom volunteers and phone calls. All materials were provided in both Spanish and English. Multiple screening and assessment measures were used to monitor and improve the selection process to ensure that no student or ethnic group was unfairly excluded.

The passing trends for G/T students exceeded those of other district students at all grade levels on the TAKS Mathematics, Reading, and Writing tests. Likewise, the percent of G/T students achieving commended performance exceeded that of other district students at all grade levels on the TAKS Mathematics, Reading, and Writing tests.

Learning Centers

Commitment 7

The Dallas Independent School District shall maintain the South Dallas, West Dallas, and East Dallas Learning Centers. The district shall provide a Learning Center Management Plan to address administrative, staffing, evaluation, instruction and other issues important to the mission of these centers to support and further the achievement of the students. The district recognizes that these Learning Centers may develop exemplary practices that may be utilized in other district schools whose students are similar to those enrolled in the Learning Centers. The district may make revisions to the Learning Center Management Plan to focus funding, personnel, and programs on the specific needs of the students enrolled at a particular campus. These Centers shall continue to develop educational programs and practices to promote the long-term eradication of the under-education of this identified population.

Status

The district maintained 16 Learning Centers in East, West, and South Dallas, inclusive. The Management Plan/Manual was maintained in the Area 2 Office and is updated annually. The Centers continued to serve a predominately disadvantaged population and employed exemplary programs and practices that promote the long-term eradication of the under-education of disadvantaged students. Funding levels were reduced by approximately six million dollars. Overall, elementary and middle

Learning Center students performed at a level slightly below that of district students on the TAKS Reading test and at a comparable level on the TAKS Mathematics test.

Administrative changes included the decentralization of administrative oversight, removal of staff from the Area 3 Office, reduction of professional and support staff, removal of senior administrators, elimination of incentives that attracted and retained quality teachers/professional staff, an increase in teacher/student ratios, closure of Daniel "Chappie" James and Billy E. Dade as 4-6 Learning Centers (although students enrolled in other nearby Learning Centers), movement of sixth grade elementary students to middle schools, and the transformation of Billy E. Dade and Alex W. Spence into middle Learning Centers. These changes had a negative impact on the implementation of the original Learning Centers concept. What remains differs considerably from the original concept. Although expensive in conception, strong leadership, reduced teacher/student ratios, exemplary programs, incentive pay options and explicit hiring criteria for teachers proved to be the key ingredients in the formula for success in improving the academic performance of disadvantaged students. The restoration of incentives to attract highly effective teachers (CEIs ≥ 50) to the Learning Centers will assure that the original foundation of the Learning Centers is met, namely staffing the Centers with highly effective teachers with a proven history of success with disadvantaged students.

From 2003-04 to 2005-06, elementary Learning Center students (grades four through six) outperformed other elementary district students on the TAKS Reading, Mathematics, Writing and Science tests. At the middle school level, Learning Center students matched or performed slightly below other district middle school students. However, in 2006-07, elementary Learning Center students performed below other elementary district students on the TAKS Reading test and essentially matched district middle school students on the TAKS Mathematics test. The greatest loss was observed among sixth grade elementary students who were moved to middle schools. In addition, all Learning Centers with a Recognized AEIS rating dropped to Acceptable except for Rice. The drop was most likely due to changes in the TAKS passing rates used in the state's accountability system. Daniel Chappie James and Billy Dade, two of the highest performing Learning Centers, were closed due to the relocation of the all girls' school and low student enrollment at both schools.

However, students were moved to other nearby Learning Centers.

Elementary and Secondary Bilingual Education and ESL Programs

Commitment 9

The district shall maintain bilingual and English as a Second Language programs in Grades PK-12 in a comprehensive effort to meet the affective, linguistic, and academic needs of LEP students. In elementary schools, the program shall focus on teaching English and subject matter through developmental bilingual classrooms, shared teaching, ESL self-contained classes, and send-in ESL teachers. In secondary schools, the ESL program shall provide LEP students with sequential instruction in ESL, sheltered English, and other sheltered content courses in mathematics, science, and social studies. The programs shall be based upon current best practices and shall be designed to help LEP students acquire English proficiency and facilitate their integration into the mainstream curriculum to ensure equal educational opportunity. The district shall encourage teachers to seek ESL certification and will provide professional development opportunities for the same.

Status

The district maintained a BE/ESL program in grades PK-12 to meet the affective, linguistic and academic needs of LEP students. Instructional models implemented at the elementary level included BE in grades PK through four, the Newcomer program in grades four through six, and ESL in grades PK through six. At the secondary level, the M-LEP department developed a four to five year sequence of courses based on students' English language proficiency levels that included the English Language Institute, ESL, sheltered English and other sheltered content classes. Students remained in these courses until they met exit criteria and moved into mainstream instruction.

The M-LEP department received funds from four sources: general operating, desegregation, Title III and Title I. The majority of funding was from general operating and Title III. A \$4,000 per year bilingual stipend was provided to encourage uncertified BE teachers to seek certification and to attract and retain qualified BE teachers and professional support staff. The district also provided a \$500 per year stipend for ESL teachers.

The majority of LEP students met the exit criterion (WMLS 4 and above) on the WMLS by the end of grade six (Figure 3). Students meeting the exit

criterion decreased from grades seven to nine with a slight rebound at grade 10 and then declining again at grade 12. The decrease may be the results of new students coming in at the secondary level. Exited LEP students outperformed current LEP and Non-LEP students on all TAKS subjects across all grades.

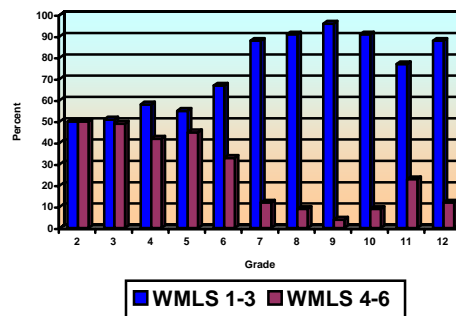


Figure 3. Percent of LEP students scoring at WMLS 1-3 and 4-6 by grade, fall 2006-spring 2007.

Recommendations

- Review vocations at the Skyline CDC that are less dependent on achievement based on language proficiency and more on other skills and aptitudes associated with success, thereby allowing greater access for all students.
- Restoration of incentives to attract highly effective teachers (CEIs ≥ 50) to the Learning Centers will assure the original foundation of the Learning Centers is met, namely staffing the Centers with highly effective teachers with a proven history of success with disadvantaged students.
- Review sheltered and ESL courses to determine their effectiveness at meeting the linguistic and academic needs of LEP students.
- Revise the Learning Center Management plan to reflect new staffing criteria for high needs schools and assign teachers to the Learning Centers with both high CEIs and a proven track with high need or disadvantaged students
- Encourage bilingual teachers to teach in the G/T program and allow them to retain their stipend.