

Dallas Achieves Early Childhood: 2007-08

At-a-Glance

Dallas Achieves is a District initiative to become the best urban school district by 2010 and graduate every student ready for college and the workforce. One aspect of this initiative is to build on the foundation of college and workforce readiness by expanding Early Childhood programs that prepare children in the Dallas community with the skills to be successful in school.

Modes of Access

Throughout the year, members of the District and childcare community came together twice a month to develop a plan and set goals for the Early Childhood community. Their focus was to increase school readiness by increasing access to early childhood programs, investing in prenatal programs, improving program quality, and providing more support to parents. The following are four modes of access defined to increase school readiness:

Professional Development

Early childcare agencies and providers in Dallas County will be given the opportunity to attend Professional Development training alongside DISD teachers at no cost. Training will cover a variety of topics with a focus on development and skills for children from birth to four years of age. Those who attend will be able to take this information to their staff and incorporate it into their curriculum.

This summer, 362 providers attended the first collaborative professional development training with 1315 DISD teachers. The fall training session will be Saturday, October 18 and Saturday, November 8, 2008.

DISD Prekindergarten

School districts shall offer prekindergarten programs if 15 or more eligible 4-year olds can be identified and classroom space is available. Districts may apply to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for grants to expand existing half day prekindergarten or kindergarten programs to full day or establish prekindergarten programs at additional campuses. These programs are designed to develop skills necessary for success in school with a focus on pre-reading, language, and mathematics.

The number of campuses offering full day prekindergarten programs slightly declined from the previous year, while the number of campuses offering half day programs slightly increased from the previous year. In 2007-08, a total of 98 schools offered full day

prekindergarten programs and 46 schools offered half day prekindergarten programs. Student enrollment increased from the previous year with 8,624 students enrolled, 91% of whom were continuously enrolled at the same campus throughout the year.

The student population was predominately Hispanic, with African Americans as the next largest group. Figure 1 show the percentage of each ethnicity from students who were continuously enrolled.

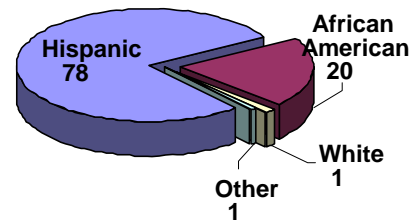


Figure 1. Percentage of ethnicities continuously enrolled.

The projected number of schools offering prekindergarten programs for the 2008-09 school year will decrease slightly. Six schools which offered prekindergarten programs in previous years will be exempt for 2008-09 due to overcrowding and lack of space.

School Readiness Integration (SRI) Partnerships

School districts that receive grants from TEA to expand Prekindergarten programs are required to partner with community childcare programs. Community childcare programs eligible to participate in the SRI partnership must be licensed, accredited, within DISD boundaries, and serving a minimum of 30 three and four year olds. Additional requirements may be determined by the school district.

In 2007-08, three SRI sites in Dallas County served approximately 108 students. Each SRI site partnered with a nearby elementary school that provided the childcare center with a DISD certified teacher to teach preschool in their center. This partnership is designed to develop reading, math, and social skills necessary for success in school.

On April 18, 2008, a committee of DISD staff received and evaluated fifteen applications for SRI partnership for the 2008-09 school year. The committee scored each application and conducted several site visits.

Eight centers were approved to participate in the SRI partnership for the 2008-09 school year. Two of these centers are the same centers and teachers as last year.

Informational

There are 405 licensed childcare centers that feed into DISD schools. More than 75% of these centers have participated in the Professional Development training this summer or have a SRI partnership. Unfortunately, not all centers are able to participate for various reasons. Therefore, *Dallas Achieves* Early Childhood has taken the initiative to include all centers in Dallas County by distributing information on a regular basis. Information will include various topics with a focus on child development and skills for children from birth to four years of age.

Program Quality and Support

Another focus of *Dallas Achieves* Early Childhood is to improve program quality and increase parent support. Members of the District and childcare community divided themselves into several committees to focus on the following items:

Standards

Early childhood specialists and providers have examined and defined measurable concepts, knowledge, and skills that children should acquire at each age level from birth through four years of age. These skills will define standards that will be used as a consensus between the district and childcare community through the four modes of access. The defined standards will also facilitate in the assessment of program quality, effectiveness, and teacher training.

Standards are near completion and will be reviewed by internal and external teams before final standards are determined.

Quality

A comprehensive quality audit has been proposed to examine a sample of early childhood classrooms in DISD, Head Start, and Childcare groups. The results of the quality audit will be used to assist in professional development training. A proposal is in process to secure funding to contract an organization to conduct the study.

Assessments

Several comprehensive assessments are being examined to determine the best measure of student ability in Dallas County. This procedure will ensure that children in Dallas County are at the level they need to be successful in school. A proposal has been submitted for a pilot test to early childcare providers and agencies within the community to receive and distribute an assessment with the needed technology and support.

Once complete, efforts will be made to identify and implement an ongoing, scientifically based assessment that measures attainment of age appropriate skills and guides children's learning/development. Results will facilitate in enhancing professional development training.

Parent Education

Dallas Achieves Early Childhood emphasizes the need to educate and support parents as the child's first teacher by providing access to information on quality Parent Education Programs and researching quality parent programs to replicate and boost participation.

A proposal is in process to contract with a research group to determine the best practices for parent education programs. Not only will results facilitate in expanding quality parent education programs, but also provide opportunities to build community awareness on quality early childhood programs and child development.

Single Point of Information/Entry

The single point of information will potentially be used by parents who are looking for quality parent education programs and quality early childhood programs. DISD Technology department will develop and publish this single point of information to the web. This access point will also be used as a referral system to help parents with children from birth to 4 years find and access applications to early childhood programs in their area. Additional information may be included, but not yet determined.

Fundraising

There were no funds available this year. Several proposals have been drafted this year to begin initial quality audit, parent education benchmarks, and assessments. Fundraising efforts will be an ongoing process in order to expand future programs, produce additional assessments, and increase professional development training opportunities.

The Foundation for Community Empowerment (FCE) has provided assistance in the fundraising process by shifting focus to Early Childhood.

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