

Learning Centers: 2007-08

At-a-Glance

The Learning Centers are court-ordered efforts to provide quality educational programs in neighborhood schools for disadvantaged minority children. Upon release from the *Tasby v. Moses* desegregation order and supervision of the United States District Court, the Dallas Independent School 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.

Demographics

The 12 elementary and four middle Learning Centers enrolled 4,711 students as compared to 5,044 students for 2006-07. Forty-seven percent (47%) of Learning Center students were African American, 51% were Hispanic, and less than 2% Other (White, Asian, and Native American). Districtwide, 30% of students in grades four through eight were African American and 64% were Hispanic. The general trend is that African American enrollment decreased while Hispanic enrollment increased both in Learning Centers and the district.

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the middle Learning Center teachers were African American, 7% were Hispanic and 30% were of other ethnicities. Sixty-nine percent (69%) of the middle Learning Center teachers were female and 31% male.

Intermediate Learning Center teacher ethnicities were 60% African American, 14% Hispanic, and 26% other ethnicities. The percent of African American teachers was higher in Learning Centers compared to the rest of the district (34%), while the percent of Hispanic teachers was lower (30%). Learning Center 4-5 teachers were primarily female (78%).

Budget

Total allocated costs for 2006-07 were approximately \$16.09 million. Total allocated costs for 2007-08 were approximately \$17.05. Campus allocations averaged \$3,191 per pupil for 2006-07, and \$3,621 in 2007-08. However, per-pupil allocations varied by campus, as noted in past years.

CEI

Comparisons of 2004-05 and 2007-08 CEI's showed the difference in CEI's before and after the elimination of teacher based incentives. Learning Center teacher

CEI's in language arts have decreased over the past three years due, at least in part, to the elimination of teacher incentives.

Class Size

Previously, the goal for pupil-teacher ratios was 18:1 with a cap of 20:1. This has been changed to 22:1 for elementary Learning Centers and 20:1 for middle Learning Centers. Mean class size for intermediate Learning Centers was 16 students per class. The smallest average class size was at grade four (mean = 15), while grade five had a mean of 17 students.

Of the 741 intermediate Learning Center classes in the 12 core courses, only 31 classes or 4% had more than 20 students. Overall, the average Learning Center middle school class size, across twelve subject areas, was 14 students per class, while the average comparable district class size was 18 students. Grade seven had the largest class size of 16, with 13 for grade six and 12 for grade eight.

Organization

The Management Council, Learning Center Implementation Plan and the Learning Center Operations Manual continued to be the primary guidelines for the implementation of the Learning Centers. The Management Council continued to be the governing body for the Learning Centers. The Learning Center Operations Manual is a document for campus principals that summarize the actions, with datelines, that each principal must follow.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills

Elementary Learning Center students, in grades four and five combined, outperformed other district students on the TAKS Reading test. Eighty-one percent (81%) of Learning Center students met standard, compared to 77% of all district students. Overall, there was a 3% increase in the percent of district students who met standard on TAKS Reading from 2007 to 2008, compared to a 9% increase for Learning Center students. In 2005, 2006, and 2008, elementary Learning Center students outperformed other district students (Figure 1). The 2007 school year saw major program changes that may have affected TAKS results (EA07-155-2).

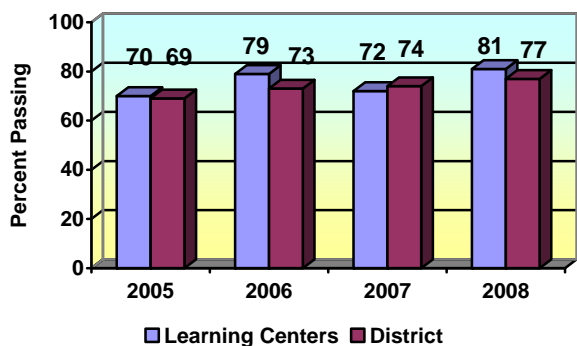


Figure 1 Elementary Learning Centers and District students' percent passing TAKS Reading by year.

Across grades six through eight, 83% of Learning Center students met standard compared to 85% of district students. Both district and Learning Center students made a 3% increase in the percent of students who met standard from 2007 to 2008. Middle Learning Centers lag behind district passing rates for TAKS Reading (Figure 2).

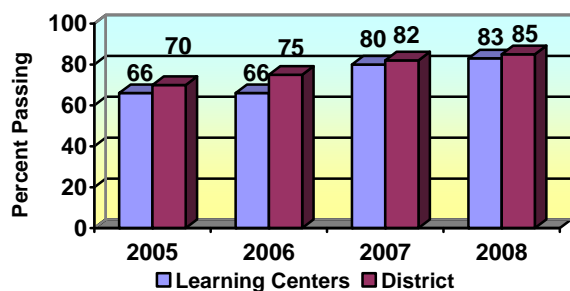


Figure 2 Middle Learning Centers and District students' percent passing TAKS Reading by year.

In grades four and five, 85% of Learning Center students met standard on TAKS Mathematics, compared to 80% of district students. From 2007 to 2008, there was a 2% increase in the percent of grade four and five district students passing TAKS Mathematics, compared to a 4% increase for the Learning Centers. For the 2007-08 school year, Learning Centers had a 5% higher passing rate than district students (Figure 3).

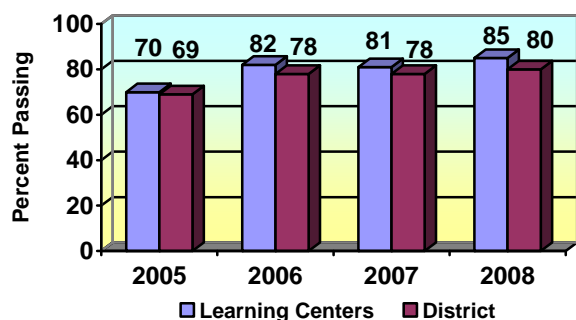


Figure 3 Elementary Learning Centers and District students' percent passing TAKS Mathematics by year.

In grades six through eight, Learning Centers performed at a comparable level with district students on TAKS Mathematics. The percent of students who met standard increased 4% at Learning Centers, compared to 6% for district students. Overall, Learning Center students had a 1% increase in passing performance compared to district students in 2007, and a 1% decrease in passing performance compared to the district in 2008 (Figure 4).

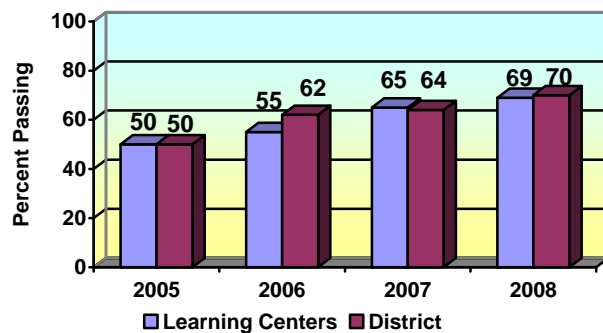


Figure 4 Middle Learning Centers and District students' percent passing TAKS Mathematics by year.

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the Learning Center grade four students met standard on the writing portion of the TAKS, compared to the district's average of 87%. Eighty-two percent (82%) of the Learning Center and 84% of district students met standard on the 2008 TAKS Writing test at the seventh grade.

Grade five TAKS Science results indicated that the percent of Learning Center students (77%) who met standard was greater than that of district students (71%). District students showed a gain of 9% from 2007 to 2008, while Learning Center students showed an 11% gain over the same period. In 2007, grade eight district students outperformed Learning Center students. However, in 2008 Learning Center students had a slightly higher passing rate than district students. Learning Center students had a gain of 17% from 2007 to 2008, while district students had a 14% gain.

On the eighth grade TAKS Social Studies test, 85% of Learning Center students met standard, compared to 87% of district students. District students showed an increase of 8% on the TAKS Social Studies test from 2007 to 2008, while Learning Center students showed a 7% increase.

Recommendations

The elimination of teacher incentives limits the quantity and quality of teachers available. Consideration should be given to reinstating some portions of the incentives or the development of additional incentives to attract highly qualified Learning Center teachers.