

Report to the Superintendent on the Declaration of the Commitment and Covenants: Academic Programs 2007-08

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EA08-164-4

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 144 schools. At grades PK-3, the program served a total of 63, 823 students with a student/teacher ratio of 20/1. Seventy percent (70%) of the students served were Hispanic. Although the program continued to serve students in grades PK-3, the program focused on ages 0 to 5. For this population, service delivery was coordinated through community-based childcare agencies. 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, Virtual classrooms and parent training. The program also saw the addition of Dallas Achieves—an initiative to help Dallas ISD become the best urban school district by 2010. The most commonly used diagnostic and prescriptive measures continued to be Dial 3, *TPRI/Tejas Lee* and benchmark and teacher-made tests. The overall *TAKS* passing rate for

grade 3 was 89% in reading and 76% in mathematics indicating mastery of essential skills by most students at the end of third grade (Figures 1 and 2).

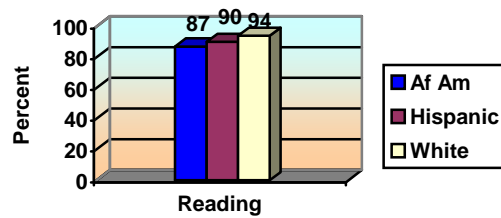


Figure 1: A comparison of grade 3 passing rates on the *TAKS* Reading test by ethnicity.

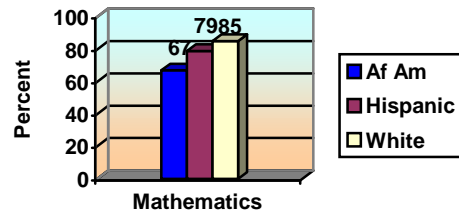


Figure 2: A comparison of grade 3 passing rates on the *TAKS* Mathematics test by ethnicity.

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 High School. The program served an ethnically diverse predominately disadvantaged population with an enrollment of 9,036 students (55% Hispanic, 31% African American, 11% White and 2% Asian and Native Americans). Of these, about 2% was LEP. The program continued to use a review committee to determine students' eligibility while seats were awarded on a 70/30 split (30% districtwide and 70% within each Learning Community). Since fulfilling the Commitments and Covenants, the program has seen administrative changes that include the addition of grades 10 and 11 to the Irma Rangel Young Women's Leadership School, closure of M. Jackson, opening of Darrell Vanguard, and decentralization of administrative oversight. The magnet program continued to offer unique curricula not offered in neighborhood schools. All magnet high schools had an advisory committee comprised of professionals in the school's specialty. There has been an increase in program funding (from \$40,872,481 in 2006-07 to \$44,207,063 in 2007-08). Magnet students continued to score higher passing and commended rates on the *TAKS Reading, Mathematics and Writing* tests than their district

counterparts. All magnet schools received favorable AEIS ratings: Exemplary (14), Recognized (5) and Acceptable (5). These results show that twice as many schools were cited as Exemplary in 2007-08 than in 2006-07.

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 programs: (1) the G/T program (grades K-5), (2) the G/T Seminar (grades 7-8) and G/T elective courses (grade 6); and (3) Advanced Placement Courses, (grades 7-12). Students gained admission to the program in two ways; (1) test scores (88th percentile) 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. 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 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 the Internet. 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. There have been no significant changes

to the program since fulfilling the Commitments and Covenants.

The passing rates for G/T students exceeded those of other district students at all grade levels on the *TAKS Reading, Mathematics, and Writing* tests (Figures 3-5).

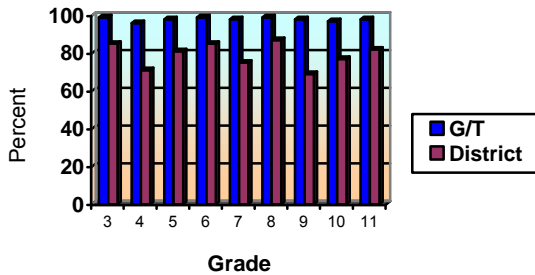


Figure 3: Percent of G/T and other district students who met the passing standard on the English version of the *TAKS Reading* test

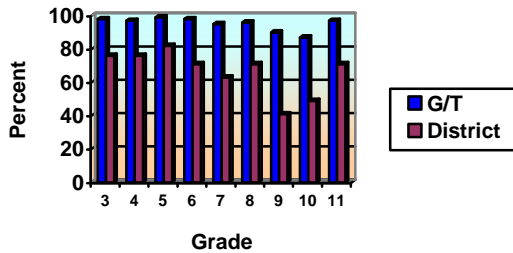


Figure 4: Percent of G/T and other district students who met the passing standard on the English version of the *TAKS Mathematics* test.

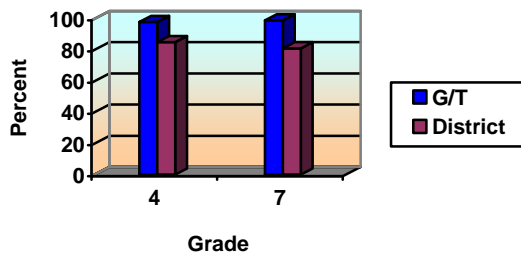


Figure 5: Percent of G/T and other district students who met the passing standard on the English version of the *TAKS Writing* test.

Likewise, the percent of G/T students achieving Commended performance more than doubled that of other district students across all grades.

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 is maintained in the program manager's office and is updated annually. A copy of the manual is also kept in the principal's office at each Learning Center. 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 for the Learning Centers increased by about one million dollars. Administrative changes implemented since fulfilling the Commitments and Covenants included an increase in the pupil/teacher ratios, elimination of supplemental pay incentives and a reduction in professional staff at various schools. For a detailed list of changes, see the 2006-07 Report to the General Superintendent on the Declaration of Commitments and Covenants on Academic Programs (EA07-164-2) and the 2006-07 Final Evaluation Report on the Learning Centers (EA07-155-2).

Elementary Learning Center students continued to outperform other elementary district students on the *TAKS Reading and Mathematics* tests (5-6 %age points). At the middle school level, Learning Center students essentially matched or performed slightly below that of other district middle school students (1-2 %age points) [Figures 6 and 7].

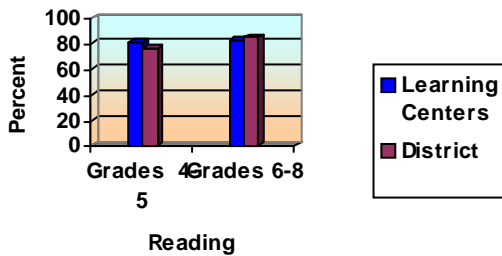


Figure 6: A comparison of *TAKS Reading* passing rates for Learning Center and district students by grade level.

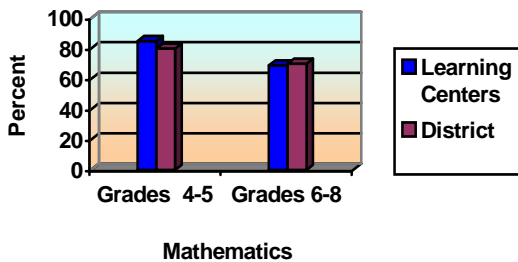


Figure 7: A comparison of *TAKS Mathematics* passing rates for Learning Center and district students by grade level.

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. At the

elementary level, the instructional models consisted of BE in grades PK-4, Newcomer Program in grades 4-6, and ESL in grades PK-6. At the secondary level, the M-LEP department developed a four to five year sequence of courses based on students' English language proficiency. These courses consisted of ESL/Sheltered courses in grades 6-12 and an English Language Institute (ELI) in grades 6-12. Students remained in these courses until they met exit criteria and moved into mainstream instruction.

The program budget (\$9,687,921) was comprised of general operating and Title III funds. The district provided a \$4,000 per year bilingual stipend 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. There have been no significant changes to the program since fulfilling the Commitments and Covenants.

WMLS results indicated that an extremely high percentage of LEP students are failing to meet exit criterion ($WMLS \geq 4$) at all grade levels. Although the BE/ESL program implemented a number of teaching strategies, more than 85% of the students in grades 2-6 and more than 95% of the students in grade 7-12 still failed to acquire language proficiency (Figure 8). This was particularly evident in middle and high schools where LEP students are placed in sheltered and ESL classes. Exited LEP students outperformed LEP and district students on all *TAKS* subjects across all grades.

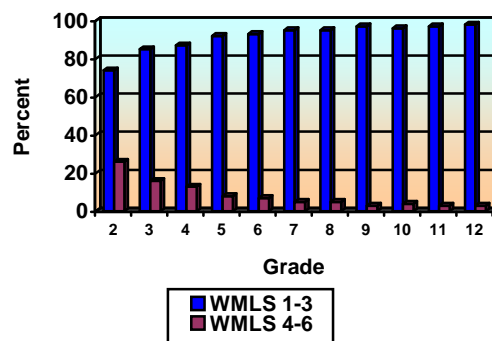


Figure 8: Percent of LEP students scoring at WMLS 1-3 and 4-6 by grade.

Recommendation

- Review sheltered and ESL courses to determine their effectiveness at meeting the linguistic and academic needs of LEP students.