Extended-Year Operations: TAKS Academy and Summer School Programs, 2009-10

At-A-Glance

The Dallas Independent School District provided extended-year educational services for eligible students in elementary, middle, and high schools. Beginning with the summer 2010, the educational program was divided into two sections to better achieve two distinct objectives. First, TAKS Academies were designed to provide remedial test preparation for fifth and eighth grade school students prior to the third administration of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The second session, Summer School, extends traditional and bilingual instruction with the purpose of promoting academic success and allowing for credit recovery. At the elementary level, students attending Summer School received instruction in the core curriculum integrated with studies in the arts. Enrichment courses were offered at all grade levels.

TAKS Academies

Districtwide, 2,132 fifth grade and 2,230 eighth grade students failed to meet TAKS standards on the previous two administrations of the test and were required to attend the TAKS Academies. Twenty-two elementary schools housed 1,847 students (87% of eligible students) attending the fifth grade academies; twelve middle schools housed eighth grade academies for 1,176 students (53% of eligible students). Students received tutoring on weekday mornings from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. beginning June 14 and ending July 1. The final three days were reserved for the third administration of the TAKS exams.

Exactly 1,307 fifth grade students attended TAKS Academies for reading. Only 315 students (21%) met the standard for TAKS Reading. The vast majority, 992 students (76%), either failed to meet the standard or did not take the third administration. Of the students attending for reading, 977 were promoted; 710 (73%) of the promoted students either did not meet the reading standard or did not take the exam.

Results were similar for the 1,185 fifth grade students attending the TAKS Academies for math. Nearly 16% (187 students) met the math standard; 852 (72%) did not meet the standard and 146 (11%) did not take the math exam. Just over 72% of the attending students were promoted to the sixth grade. Of the promoted students, nearly 82% did not take the TAKS Math or did not meet the standard.

Almost 7% (35 students) of the 542 students attending the eighth grade TAKS Academy for reading were retained in the eighth grade; 72% (391 students) were promoted and no record was available for over 21% of the students. Only 64 students (12%) met the reading standard. Of the 391 promoted students, 332 (85%) either did not meet the standard or did not take the exam.

The TAKS Math results for the 1,176 attending eighth grade students were similar to the results for TAKS Reading. Only 87 students (8%) met the standard. Most students (92%) either failed to meet the standard or did not take the third administration. Over 74% (787 students) of the attendees matriculated to the ninth grade. Of those students promoted, 90% either did not take the exam or did not meet the standard.

Elementary Summer School

Past Summer School instruction included TAKS preparation and testing. As these objectives were addressed through the TAKS Academies, failure to meet the standard on previous TAKS administrations was not a necessary criterion for Summer School recommendation. Generally, students facing retention were recommended to attend the Summer School session. Furthermore, the elementary Summer School session transitioned to a more “summer camp” environment that integrated core-subject instruction with studies in various arts disciplines. Such changes were made to negate summer learning loss and spur positive attitudes toward attending school. Students who were not academically challenged during the traditional school year were encouraged to attend, though the majority was recommended.

Twenty-two elementary schools hosted Summer School Programs. Students whose home school was not a site were bused to and from their respective home schools. The session began on July 6 and ended July 29, resulting in 15 instructional days. Classes met from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with breakfast served prior to classroom instruction. The general schedule allowed for core content instruction from classroom teachers in the
morning, arts instruction interspersed with core instruction during the early afternoon, and large-group arts enrichment to finish the day.

The number of students who attended the Summer School session was 7,648. Of the attendees, 75% were Hispanic, 23% were African American, and 1% were Anglo. Negligible numbers of Asian and Native American students attended. Nearly 42% (3192) of the students chose to attend the session voluntarily, while 58% (4,456) were recommended to attend.

Approximately 6,832 students were initially recommended to attend elementary Summer School and 4,456 (65%) actually attended. Of the recommended students who attended, most (3,343) attended more than 90% of the instructional days. Of the 4,456 students, 3,402 were promoted to the next grade, 709 were retained, and no record was available for 345 students.

Promotion results regarding the 2,376 students assigned to Summer School and not attending were similar to the results of the students who did attend. Just over 72% (1,722) of these students were promoted to the next grade while only 2.1% were retained. Little can be inferred from this similarity, however, as a much higher percentage of these students (25%) did not have a record of promotion or retention available. This is most likely due to these students leaving the district.

Secondary Summer School

Twelve sites hosted Summer School sessions for sixth through eighth grade students. The session began on July 6 and concluded on July 29, resulting in 15 instructional days. This instructional program was open to students who failed at least two courses during the 2009-10 academic year and was designed to allow for credit recovery in 15 courses.

Middle school students accounted for 1,986 of the students attending Summer School. Of the attendees, over 60% of the sixth grade students, 61% of the seventh graders, and only 34% of the eighth grade students attended at least 14 of the 15 instructional days. Generally, the course passing rates ranged from 86% to 97% with an overall passing rate of 87%. Over 82% of the students were promoted to the next grade; 5% were retained.

Ten sites hosted Summer School at the high school level. This program allowed students the opportunity to receive credit for courses not successfully completed during the 2009-10 academic year. The session operated from June 16 to July 22, allowing 31 instructional days for 3,899 students enrolled in 35 different courses.

From the overall enrollment total of 5,665, nearly 83% of the received grades were passing and almost 12% failing. Of the 310 twelfth grade students attending Summer School, 88 met the requirements for graduation. The summer graduation ceremony took place on August 21.

Recommendations

The reliability of the data collected regarding the recommendation of students for extended-year services prohibited some interpretations, possibly resulting in under-reporting the number of students recommended and attending Summer School. Irregularities in reporting those students recommended for attendance made it nearly impossible to parse out students who attended Summer School voluntarily, particularly for those who attended the fifth and eighth grade TAKS Academies.

Nevertheless, students were recommended to attend Summer School to prevent retention. Many of these students did not actually attend the Summer School session and were promoted to the next grade level. Promotion rates for students not attending were, in fact, only slightly lower than the rates for attending students. It is recommended that the administrative staff investigate the lack of consistency in applying the standards for promotion to the next grade.

For more information contact Program Evaluation at (972) 925-6457.