African American Success Initiative: 2010-2011

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At- a-Glance

In line with Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Board of Trustees’ and Superintendent’s goal to improve the academic achievement of all students and to eliminate the achievement gap between and among student groups, the Dallas ISD African American Success Initiative was created to address poor academic performance and achievement among African American students. The AASI mission was to eliminate the achievement gap by ensuring that African American students’ academic, social, cultural, and emotional needs were being met as they engaged in rigorous and relevant instruction, while striving to become college and workforce ready.

The focus of the 2010-11 AASI evaluation was to describe characteristics of the AASI program and examine Developmental Assets Profile results for African American students.

Program Characteristics

African American Success Initiative (AASI) program activities were coordinated, overseen and implemented, to varying degrees, by Dallas ISD Professional Development, Special Education and Social Studies Departments, Dallas ISD African American Male Taskforce, and a curriculum advisory committee. AASI programs and services were available to teachers and students (regardless of their identified race or ethnicity) at schools across all Dallas ISD learning communities.

During the 2010-11 school year, AASI funding was utilized to support several student development activities (seminars, workshops, college fairs, and panel discussions) that focused on the academic and cultural needs of students of color. The AASI Dallas ISD Religious Forum encouraged Dallas area community and clergy leaders to partner with Dallas ISD to implement strategies to increase positive outcomes for African American male youth.

About 500 Dallas ISD students, teachers, and other school staff participated in Dallas ISD Reflections of an Inner City African American Male seminars. These question-answer workshops allowed district African American males to “voice” their opinions and experiences related to school and community climate, social and academic stressors, and areas in need of additional support and intervention.

The AASI student advocate mentoring program matched at-risk middle and high students with student advocates (district teachers or school staff). Student advocates served as mentors for program students and were responsible for connecting students to resources, assuring their attendance at district and community events related to their achievement, empowering them with information that will assist them in choosing and completing academically rigorous academic coursework and programs, and assisting with college and financial aid applications. African American Success Initiative advocates received a stipend for participating in the AASI student advocate program. Data regarding the number and characteristics of AASI advocates and mentees was not available for evaluation staff review.

African American Success Initiative implemented the K-2 Reading Academy in 2010-11. About 1,000 Kindergarten-2nd grade teachers participated in AASI funded professional development activities focused on increasing instructional skills that would ensure that all students, with special emphasis on African American students, were reading at grade level by the end of their second grade year. African American Success Initiative funding was also utilized to provide supplemental pay to teachers at targeted elementary campuses who provided intensive tutoring services to K-2” grade struggling readers.

Additionally, AASI promoted parental involvement by supporting and assisting parents and families in encouraging their children toward college and the world of work. The initiative provided travel funding in an effort to ensure that families were able to attend AASI events that encouraged student academic achievement and college and university matriculation.

Developmental Assets Profile Survey

The Developmental Assets are 40 common sense, positive experiences and qualities that help influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults. The framework is based in youth development, resiliency, and prevention...
research and its proven effectiveness. These assets are related to a range of outcomes for children and youth. Low levels of assets are related to increased risk for negative outcomes including academic underachievement and school problems; alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug use; precocious sexual activity; and antisocial behavior and violence. High levels of assets are related to positive outcomes including academic achievement, leadership, thriving, and well being. Assets are crucial for the healthy development of all youth, regardless of their community size, geographic region, gender, economic status, race, or ethnicity.

During the 2010-11 school year, 44,095 Dallas ISD secondary students (Grades 6-12) participated in the DAP survey. About 24 percent (10,516) of DAP participants were African American. Figure 1 displays the percentages of African American students who reported low, fair, good and excellent levels of developmental assets in each DAP context area.

![Figure 1. DAP Context Results For African American Students.](image)

Developmental Assets Profile results showed that the largest percentage (51%) of respondents fell within the excellent range of the family context area. The family context area examined youths' involvement in positive family communication and support, clear family rules, quality time at home, advice and encouragement from parents, and feeling safe at home.

Community was the context area with the largest percentage (21%) of participants to report low levels of developmental assets. This context area assessed youths' participation in activities and involvements in the larger community such as sports, clubs, groups and religious activities, creative activities (such as music and the arts), having good neighbors, accepting others, and helping in the community.

Figure 2 displays the percentages of students who reported low, fair, good and excellent levels of developmental assets in each DAP category area. The highest percentages of African American excellent responses were found in the support (37%) and positive identity (35%) areas. Similar to DAP context area results, category results revealed that constructive use of time was the area with the largest percentage (19%) of participants to report low levels of developmental assets. This context area assessed youths' participation in religious or spiritual activity, involvement in a sport, club, or group, creative activities, and quality time at home.

![Figure 2. DAP Category Results For African American Students.](image)

**Recommendations**

Recommendations for African American Success Initiative program improvement include (1) improving the quality and availability of data and (2) determining additional services and strategies (particularly within DAP community and constructive use of time areas) that would be most beneficial in increasing positive outcomes for African American youth.

For more information, please visit the Dallas ISD Evaluation and Accountability Department website at [http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/index.htm](http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/index.htm)