The State of Texas provided funding to school districts to offer prekindergarten programs to eligible children. Prekindergarten programs were designed to help young children develop the skills necessary to succeed in school with a focus on language, mathematics, and social skills. State and local agencies provided support to teachers through curriculum guidelines and professional development opportunities. The implementation of the prekindergarten program continued to follow research-based strategies to ensure program success and sustainability.

During the 2010-11 school year, the state awarded the Dallas ISD the Early Start Tier 3 and Texas School Ready grants. Both grants provided additional instructional materials, enhanced professional development, a progress monitoring tool, and mentoring. The Early Start Tier 3 allowed for the expansion of half-day programs to full-day.

The Dallas ISD has provided a half-day prekindergarten program since the 1985-86 school year and has been a recipient of grant funds to operate full-day programs since the 1999-00 school year. The district’s prekindergarten program has been located in community based child-care facilities since the 2007-08 school year. In 2010-11, the Dallas ISD provided a prekindergarten program in 142 elementary schools and 13 community based child-care facilities.

### Participants

Children who lived within the boundaries of the school district were eligible to enroll if they were at least three years of age and met one of the following criteria: (a) were unable to speak and understand the English language, (b) were eligible to participate in the national free or reduced lunch program, (c) were homeless; (d) had a parent on active duty or injured in the armed forces, (e) or ever in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services (Section 29.153(b) of the Texas Education Code). Districts could serve ineligible students on a tuition basis or through the district’s own funds.

About 61 percent of students were served in a full-day program and the other 39 percent were in a half-day program. Three-fourths of each type of program served Hispanic students and more than half (about 59%) of students were unable to speak and comprehend the English language. Ninety-four percent of students served were of low socioeconomic status.

Participant characteristics were different among students who attended prekindergarten at a SRI site. The majority of students served at a School Readiness Integration site were African American (57%) and less than half (41%) were Hispanic.

### Professional Development

Professional development opportunities varied by funding source and categorized into the following groups: all prekindergarten teachers, grant funded teachers, and non-grant funded teachers. The majority of prekindergarten teachers were Hispanic females. All prekindergarten teachers were required to complete 14 hours of professional development; grant funded teachers were required to participate in School Readiness Certification System which included the completion of 20 professional development courses and ongoing mentoring. Non-grant funded teachers had the option to attend additional courses or receive mentoring. A mentor/coach visited approximately seventy-five percent of prekindergarten teachers and almost 90 percent of those teachers found the mentors/coaches to be helpful in providing information and constructive feedback. Nearly three-fourths (69%) of prekindergarten teachers found professional development classes to be most useful to the development of a prekindergarten teacher. One-third (34%) of teachers found one-on-one guidance from a mentor/coach to be most useful to the development of a prekindergarten teacher.

### Assessment Results

Two types of assessments were administered during the 2010-11 school year: DIAL-3 and C-PALLS+. Students who attended a school that received grant funds were administered C-PALLS+ and students who attended a school that did not receive grant funds were administered DIAL-3. The Children’s Learning Institute managed C-PALLS+ results, but these results were unavailable for this report. DIAL-3 results, show that students began prekindergarten well below the national average in language skills with a Mean NCE score of 23.7. By the spring administration, students were even with or above their peers nationally with a Mean NCE score of 60.8 in language.

### Enrollment Comparisons

The district’s prekindergarten program was operated in accordance with state guidelines. Eligible students who participated in the program entered kindergarten with the skills needed to succeed and prekindergarten
teachers received ongoing professional development opportunities to become better teachers. In this report, evaluation staff examined enrollment characteristics to identify potential areas for improvement. During the 2010-11 school year, the district could have potentially served a maximum of 9,372 eligible students in a prekindergarten program, but only enrolled 8,431 students. On average, the district’s prekindergarten program operated at about 90 percent capacity (full-day programs at 94% and half-day at 85%). SRI sites operated at about 75 percent capacity, with half-day programs operating at a higher level than full-day programs. As seen from kindergarten enrollment comparisons, about 5,423 kindergarten students may have been eligible to participate in the district’s prekindergarten program, but did not attend. Unfortunately, even if the district operated at the maximum level, not all eligible students could be served by the district.

**Recommendations**

Some limitations that contributed to an operating capacity that did not meet the maximum level were: restricted access to transportation services, district attendance guidelines, and type of programs available. The following were recommendations based on evaluation findings:

- There appeared to be a higher demand for full-day prekindergarten programs at elementary schools as compared to School Readiness Integration sites. Increase the number of full-day prekindergarten programs offered at elementary schools.

- In some cases, it appeared that parents were unable to transport children to schools that offered a full-day prekindergarten program. In 2011-12, all prekindergarten programs will be full-day and eligible students may attend prekindergarten in their attendance zone. However, by policy bus transportation is not provided for prekindergarten students. The district should explore transportation options to help ensure that eligible students have access to the district’s prekindergarten program.

- Continue to build on community collaborations throughout Dallas County to reach eligible students not served by program: offer professional development opportunities to non-certified teachers in existing child-care facilities and operate SRI sites as an extension of the elementary partner school.

- Continue to track all students participating in each program.

- Use a common assessment for both prekindergarten and kindergarten students to identify gaps of learning between students served in the district’s prekindergarten program and those eligible but did not attend the district’s prekindergarten program.

- Ensure that all prekindergarten classrooms have degreed and certified teachers and continue to participate in a variety of professional development opportunities regardless of funding.

- Allow for changes to the way in which content areas offer professional development so that prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers could spend more time in combined training.

- Conduct further research to identify reasons why eligible students do not attend the district’s prekindergarten program and identify what programs they did participate in before kindergarten.

Additional information may be obtained by consulting EA11-171-2, which can be found at [www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/](http://www.dallasisd.org/inside_disd/depts/evalacct/).