The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) and the Overage Academic Center Task Force developed the John Leslie Patton Jr. Academic Center (Patton) to address growing concerns over graduation and dropout rates among Dallas ISD students. The Patton Academic Center opened in September 2010 and was an alternative school for over-age, under-credited students.

The goal of the Academic Center was to increase graduation rates throughout the district, decrease the number of overage and under-credited students in the district, maintain academic rigor while providing a non-traditional learning environment, and use relationship-based strategies to allow at-risk students to further their education.

While the majority of Dallas ISD students were on track, about 33 percent of freshman, 31 of sophomores, 29 percent of juniors, and 27 percent of seniors were between one and three years overage.

**Purpose and Scope of Evaluation**

This evaluation report includes:

- A summary of the student support services provided at Patton Academic Center.
- An examination of the issues classroom teachers were facing when serving alternative education students.
- A review of the academic support systems in place for Patton students.
- A review of the College and Career Ready interventions being used at Patton.

**Program Characteristics**

Patton Academic Center held four nine-week sessions during the 2012-13 school year. In order to be eligible to enroll at Patton Academic Center, students had to meet the following criteria outlined below.

- 17 years or older with less than 3 credits
- 18 years or older with less than 9 credits
- 19 years or older with less than 15 credits
- 20 years or older

The Patton principal indicated that campus principals could transfer students to Patton if they determined that the student would benefit from enrollment, even if they did not meet the above criteria.

**Student Support Services**

The Dallas ISD has an obligation to provide adequate funding for the support staff necessary to meet the needs of the Patton student population in order to operate an alternative education campus with the goal of graduating overage and under-credited students. Teachers mostly referred students to the counselors, social worker, or community liaison when they had social services issues; however, teachers did make themselves available if students needed to talk. Teachers tried to keep the focus on the learning objectives during class time. They reported that the social support issues needed to be under control before they could focus on teaching and learning. Students visited the counselors at Patton for graduation and personal goal setting and the social worker for counseling issues, assistance securing resources, and attendance concerns. Attendance was a major concern across all Patton staff. Adequate student support services were necessary to ensure that students were able to attend classes.

**Classroom Instruction**

Getting students to focus and make an effort was a concern for classroom teachers at Patton; however, attendance was what most impacted their ability to teach students. Deficits in reading and study skills prevented teachers from accomplishing their learning goals in class. Teachers reported that the campus should offer additional one-on-one tutoring to get
students up to the appropriate level. Teachers requested more technology in their classrooms, more training on providing direct instruction in their subject areas and dealing with at-risk students, more special education support, more time for planning instruction, and more supplies which would allow for more hands-on projects to engage students.

**Academic Support Services**

The majority of Patton students were Hispanic (about 50%) or African American (approximately 48%), were not on free or reduced lunch (65%), and were not considered limited English proficient (about 54% exited and 8% non-limited). About 50 percent of the students were male (50.4%). The largest percentages of students were seniors (about 37%). Students ranged in age from 17 to 26 with an average age of almost 20 (19.61 years old).

Patton students had difficulty attending school regularly. Without the necessary social service staff, attendance issues could not be adequately addressed. About 73 percent of students attended school less than 90 percent of the time during the 2012-13 school year (they attended school about 76% of the time).

Because of the design of the Patton program, students did not have to attend all four quarters of the 2012-13 school year. The largest percentage of the Patton student population was served during the first quarter (about 73%). About 40 percent of Patton students were enrolled for all four quarters and another 52 percent were enrolled for only one or two quarters.

Patton students earned between zero and 13 credits with an average number of credits at just below three (2.92 credits) during the 2012-13 school year. Over 75 percent of Patton students passed all course subjects with the exception of five courses: English III, first semester; English IV, second semester; Math Applications & Study Skills, first semester; Communication Applications, and TA Digital Design, second semester (about 74%, 71%, 48%, 67%, and 74% passing, respectively). The majority of students failed the Assessment of Course Performance (ACP) tests with two exceptions: English IV second semester and World Geography second semester (about 59% and 52% passing, respectively). Because the Patton curriculum was accelerated, the ACP testing schedule on the campus did not align with the ACP test design and with the material covered during Patton’s courses. Thus, students had to take ACP exams that covered material which was not covered in class.

Of the freshman class, about 29 percent were promoted and 36 percent withdrew, another 35 percent were retained. Of the senior class, 51 percent graduated, 15 percent met graduation requirements but had not passed the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), 18 percent were retained, and 16 percent withdrew. Patton students and staff reported that there was before- and after-school tutoring available as well as Saturday school. Teachers also allowed students to sit in on additional class sessions if they missed a class and wanted to make it up. Teachers and staff reported that students were behind academically and that more needed to be done to get them on the appropriate level. Additional assistance with social service needs continued to be a common theme, with staff reporting that students would not do well academically if their needs at home were not met.

**College and Career Ready Interventions**

The majority of college access services were provided by the Academic Success Program (ASP) provider on the campus. The Patton principal selected the ASP provider as their Dallas ISD College Access program provider for the 2012-13 school year. The College Access program was designed to provide supplemental college access services. The advisor on the Patton campus provided one-on-one services to students and group workshops to assist students with searching and applying for colleges, scholarships, and financial aid. Campus staff also reported that students could use Career Cruising (an online college, career, and life skills training program) as part of the College and Career Ready program on the campus. The community liaison worked with students on career related goals. Staff reported that the counselors also provided assistance with college and career readiness interventions. Patton students needed guidance on how to maneuver the college application process and deciding what to do after high school.

**Recommendations**

There were two recommendations as a result of this evaluation.

1. Add social services staff to better provide assistance with the varying behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students at Patton. This potentially includes the addition of two community liaisons, three social services advisors and a full-time psychologist.

2. Review students final course grades, ACP scores, and TAKS and STAAR scores to determine where the academic curriculum could be strengthened or additional tutoring or academic services added.

Additional information may be obtained by consulting the John Leslie Patton Jr. Academic Center Report,
EA13-136-2, which can be found at http://www.dallasiisd.org/Page/15252.