**At a Glance**

The federal *No Child Left Behind* law requires school districts to identify campuses that fail to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP), as determined by states and measured by state assessments. Texas’ AYP standards require minimum passing rates of 46.8% in reading and 33.4% in mathematics on the *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills* (TAKS). All students tested must meet these standards, which also apply to these student groups: African-American, Hispanic, white, limited English proficient (LEP), special education, and low socioeconomic status. Under Title I of *No Child Left Behind*, schools that fail to demonstrate AYP for two consecutive years are placed on improvement status. Such schools must draft a two-year improvement plan that includes measurable goals, extended school day activities, research-based instructional strategies, and teacher mentoring. Improvement schools also receive technical assistance and must spend 10% of their Title I funds on high-quality professional development for teachers.

Five Dallas Independent School District elementary schools were placed on improvement status in 2002. The 2003-2004 school year marked their second year on improvement status under Title I. The schools were Burnet, Henderson, Houston, Silberstein, and Hernandez. The schools serve mostly Hispanic and LEP students. More than 90% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

**Budget**

The five schools received a total of $4,628,463 in Title I school improvement funds for 2003-2004. Contract services, consulting, and supplies and materials comprised more than 70% of expenditures. Program managers advised the schools to use their funds to build a programmatic framework for use in later years, instead of hiring new full-time personnel.

**Program Implementation**

Funding problems at the beginning of the school year hampered implementation, preventing the schools from conducting activities for which the grant funds were intended. Technical assistance providers went unpaid for months because of the problems. In the early months of the school year, principals focused on teacher development and identifying students in need of tutoring and other assistance.

**Classroom Observations:** Observations of reading classes found high levels of student engagement, as well as effective classroom management and generally high ratings on most indicators of teacher effectiveness. Students in the observed classes remained on task and engaged in academic work, rather than bogged down in lengthy transitions between classroom activities. Observed classes spent more than 50% of their time in reading activities (these included students reading aloud in turns, teachers reading aloud, and students answering comprehension questions). About 8% of observed time was spent in TAKS-related practice. Listening and speaking (lectures, class discussions), and writing activities were observed in these classes, as well. Mathematics class observations found that much of the observed time involved review of previously learned material, and practicing new skills and procedures.

**Technical Assistance:** Under *No Child Left Behind*, Title I improvement schools must receive technical assistance. The assistance can include test data analysis, budget analysis, implementing professional development activities, or identifying research-based instructional strategies. Each of the five schools contracted a technical assistance provider. The providers had a combination of teaching and administrative experience. Principals found the providers helpful as coordinators and “sounding boards” for new ideas, but program managers found the Title I school improvement program’s technical assistance component unclear and lacking sufficient training.
The Title I improvement schools exceeded the state’s adequate yearly progress standards in reading and mathematics on the TAKS. In reading, the schools’ overall passing rates were below the district passing rates. Results in mathematics were mixed, with some schools exceeding the district passing rates and others trailing them. Figure 1 displays TAKS passing rates in reading for the Title I improvement schools and the district. Figure 2 shows TAKS passing rates in mathematics.

Figure 1
TAKS Passing Rates in Reading for Title I Improvement Schools and District

Figure 2
TAKS Passing Rates in Mathematics for Title I Improvement Schools and District

The State of Texas uses the SDAA to assess the knowledge and skills of special education students for whom the TAKS is an inappropriate measure. Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committees establish the skill levels at which students are tested. A small number of special education students at the improvement schools (133 across five campuses) took the SDAA in reading. Fewer than half of the students met ARD expectations. In mathematics, 109 students across five improvement schools took the SDAA, and one-third met ARD expectations.

English Proficiency Assessments
The Title I improvement schools had large numbers of limited English proficient students. The district administers two measures of English proficiency: The Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE) and the Woodcock-Munoz Language Survey (WMLS). On the RPTE, more than 70% of 840 students at the improvement schools who took the test scored at an intermediate or advanced level.

On the WMLS, the majority of the 1,618 Title I improvement school students who took the test scored at a “Very Limited” or “Limited” level of English proficiency. Students at these levels are considered eligible for bilingual education services. Note that these students are not necessarily the same ones who took the RPTE.

Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)/Logramos
On the norm-referenced Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), most students at the Title I improvement schools scored below grade level in reading comprehension, but slightly more than half met or exceeded grade level in mathematics.

On the Spanish language Logramos, more than 75% of students tested at four of the five improvement schools performed at or above grade level in reading comprehension. Henderson was the exception, with 50.8% scoring below grade level. In mathematics, more than 80% of students at the five improvement schools who took the test performed at or above grade level.