At a Glance

In November 1996, The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted/Talented Students was adopted by the State Board of Education to create a model for designing quality program services that meet the needs of advanced and gifted learners. In the Dallas Independent School District, these services consist of three programs: (1) the Talented and Gifted Program (TAG), grades Kindergarten through six, which serves identified gifted students, (2) the TAG Seminar (grades seven and eight) and a TAG elective class for grade six students in middle schools; and (3) Advanced Academic Courses, grades seven through 12. The elementary TAG program serves identified gifted students who are nominated, screened, and selected by an Admission, Review and Exit (ARE) committee. In middle school, TAG classes are usually offered as an elective. Secondary students in grades seven through 12 may enroll in Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) or Advanced Placement (AP) courses. In addition, four magnet schools (Polk Vanguard, Spence Academy, Travis Vanguard and Academy, and the TAG Magnet High School) serve identified gifted students from across the district.

TAG Program Enrollment

Elementary TAG program. The elementary TAG program served 9,533 students in grades Kindergarten through six, or 11.3% of the district’s elementary enrollment of 84,367. The percent of students served ranged from 3.7% at Kindergarten to 17.3% at grade four.

The total Dallas ISD student population in grades Kindergarten through six was 64.5% Hispanic, 24.0% African American, 9.1% White, 2.1% Asian American, and 0.3% Native American. The student population served by the elementary TAG program was 61.4% Hispanic, 26.7% African American, 9.3% White, 2.3% Asian American, and 0.3% Native American.

TAG Seminar. The number of students enrolled in middle school TAG Seminar courses was 1,832, or 7% of the district’s middle school enrollment in grades six through eight (26,391).

The total Dallas ISD student population in middle schools in grades six through eight was 59.5% Hispanic, 34.0% African American, 5.3% White, 0.9% Asian, and 0.2% Native American. TAG Seminar enrollment was 61.2% were Hispanic, 30.3% African American, 6.2% White, 2.0% Asian American, and 0.3% Native American.

TEA guidelines state that an “exemplary” program is one in which “the population of the gifted/talented program reflects the population of the total district or has for two of the past three years.” The Dallas ISD elementary and middle school TAG programs meet TEA standards for “exemplary” performance according to this criterion.

Advanced Academic Courses, Grades 7-12

Curriculum for Pre-Advanced Placement (Pre-AP) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses is differentiated to include a wider range and greater depth of the subject matter covered in the regular class. The purpose of these courses is to prepare students early in their careers for participation in advanced course work.

In grades seven and eight, 5,594 students, or approximately 27% of all Dallas ISD middle school students, were enrolled in at least one Pre-AP class during spring 2007. More students in grades seven and eight were enrolled in Pre-AP mathematics classes (4,246) than in Pre-AP language arts classes (3,760). Pre-AP science classes were offered at only three middle schools, Rangel, Rusk, and Travis.

In grades nine through 12, 13,239 students were enrolled in Pre-AP and AP classes during spring 2007. Slightly more than 36% of district high school students were enrolled in at least one Pre-AP or AP class, an increase over 34% in spring 2006 and 32% in spring 2005. The largest number of students in grades nine through 12 was enrolled in Pre-AP/AP English classes (8,505), followed by social studies (8,415), science (6,308) and mathematics (6,021).
Historical Enrollment

The percent of middle school students enrolled in Pre-AP courses decreased from 28.0% of total enrollment at these grades in 2002-2003 to 22.3% in 2003-2004, but increased to 26.9% in 2006-2007.

In grades nine through 12, Pre-AP and AP enrollment increased 21.2% between 2002-03 and 2006-07, from 10,923 to 13,239. Over the same time period, district high school enrollment decreased from 37,147 to 36,992.

Enrollment in advanced classes has increased among almost all student ethnic groups over the past five years. For Hispanic students in grades nine through 12, percentage enrollment in advanced classes increased from 26.0% to 35.8%; for African American students, from 27.0% to 30.9%; for White students, from 54.2% to 60.9%; and for Native American students, from 40.6% to 48.3%. The percentage of Asian American students remained about the same, 63.7% in 2002-03 and 63.1% in 2006-07.

Achievement Outcomes of TAG Students

TAKS. Passing and Commended Performance rates of TAG students exceeded those of other district students at all grade levels in all subjects.

In reading, passing rates of TAG students ranged from 93.8% at grade four to 99.0% at grade 11. Passing rates of other district students ranged from 60.9% at grade 5 to 84.9% at grade six. Commended Performance rates of TAG students ranged from 23.1% at grade 10 to 71.8% at grade six. Commended Performance rates of other district students ranged from 3.0% at grade 10 to 30.7% at grade six.

In mathematics, passing rates of TAG students ranged from 88.4% at grade nine to 97.0% at grade five. Passing rates of other district students ranged from 33.4% at grade nine to 71.0% at grade four. Commended Performance rates of TAG students ranged from 29.3% at grade 10 to 65.2% at grade five. Commended Performance rates of other district students ranged from 3.0% at grade 10 to 20.4% at grade five.

In writing, TAG students’ passing rates were 98.2% at grade four and 99.5% at grade seven, compared to passing rates of other district students of 83.8% at grade four and 85.1% at grade seven. Commended Performance rates of TAG students were 42.2% at grade four and 55.2% at grade seven, compared to 12.6% at grade four and 14.7% at grade seven for other district students.

ITBS. Reading Comprehension/Vocabulary scores of TAG students ranged from 52.6 NCEs at Kindergarten to 69.8 NCEs at grade one. Mathematics Total scores of TAG students ranged from 63.7 NCEs at grade six to 70.5 NCEs at grade two. Reading and mathematics scores of TAG students exceeded those of other district students at all grades tested.

Advanced Placement Examinations. District students took a total of 10,077 Advanced Placement examinations in 2007, up from 9,801 examinations taken in 2006 and 8,514 in 2005. The passing rate (the percent of students receiving a 3, 4, or 5) decreased slightly, from 31.4% to 29.3% (N=2,951). The largest numbers of examinations taken were in English Language and Composition (1,622), English Literature and Composition (1,415), U. S. History (1,320), Spanish Language (973) and Calculus AB (715).

Passing rates for exams taken by 10 or more students were highest on the Physics C-Electricity and Magnetism (87.2%) Studio Art-3D Design (75.0%), Calculus BC (70.9%), Computer Science AB (70.4%), and Music Theory (60.5%) examinations, and were lowest on the U.S. History (8.3%), U.S. Government and Politics (13.0%), and Microeconomics (14.1%) examinations.

Schools with the highest passing rates were the Science and Engineering Magnet (57.8%), hillcrest High School (54.7%), Talented and Gifted Magnet (54.5%), and Booker T. Washington Arts Magnet (48.3%). Two schools had passing rates between 30% and 40%; they were Bryan Adams (39.2%), and Wilson (38.9%).

Recommendations

- As in the past two years, AP examination results continue to vary widely across schools. Despite incentive programs now in place at all district high schools, 15 schools with tested students had AP passing rates below 20%, including five with passing rates below 5%. Program management should increase efforts to ensure that curriculum and instruction in advanced classes are equivalent in all district schools.