American Indian Education Program: 2008-09

L. Shane Hall, Ph.D.  EA09-193-4

**At-a-Glance**

The American Indian Education Program (AIEP) strives to address educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students so that they may meet the same performance standards expected of all Dallas Independent School District students.

The program, funded by a federal grant, is designed to enhance and supplement core educational services in Dallas ISD by providing American Indian students with additional projects and/or activities that sharpen academic skills and help them become proficient in the core content areas. The program also offers cultural enrichment programs that would otherwise be unavailable.

**Evaluation Methodology**

Program documents and an interview with the program manager provided data on AIEP activities. A specialist in the AIEP office provided a list of students who participated in the program. The Dallas ISD student databases provided additional data on these students, including demographic and test performance data.

**AIEP Context and Goals**

Texas has the nation’s fifth-largest American Indian population, with 118,362 American Indians residing in the state. Texas also is home to three Indian reservations. The five largest tribal nations in Dallas ISD are the Choctaw, Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Navajo, and Sioux nations.

In 2008-2009, the American Indian Education Program received a federal Indian Education grant of $125,731. The program served 660 students, representing about 60 tribal nations. AIEP outlined the following goals:

- Support academic achievement in reading and develop reading habits among American Indian students in grades PK-8
- Decrease dropout rates among American Indian students
- Increase the number of American Indian students who go on to college
- Increase American Indian student participation in cultural education

**Program Activities**

To further its goal of better reading habits and improved achievement in reading, AIEP sponsored book clubs for students who participated in the program. In the book clubs, students read and discussed books by American Indian authors that had American Indian cultural themes.

During the summer of 2009, AIEP hosted a two-week summer enrichment program that offered culturally related reading, writing, and mathematics instruction. Scheduled activities for the summer program included field trips to the Trinity River Audubon Center and Dallas Heritage Village. The summer program also included American Indian tribal history, story telling, and health/wellness presentations.

To encourage American Indian students to remain in school, thus reducing the dropout rate among this population, AIEP held a college and career night in March 2009. The program also co-sponsored a college and career fair with the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas. In addition, AIEP field representatives met with secondary students to monitor attendance and grades, as well as assist students with academic and behavioral issues and concerns.

A key cultural activity for AIEP was its annual Indian student Pow-Wow, held March 28, 2009, at Conrad High School. This celebration of American Indian culture featured traditional costume, music, and dance, as well as concessions that included Indian fry bread. AIEP also highlighted American Indian culture during the month of November, which is American Indian Heritage Month.

The program emphasized parent involvement through its American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The committee consisted of parents, teachers, counselors, and some secondary students.

**Program Participants**

The students who participated in AIEP were not concentrated in a small number of Dallas ISD campuses; rather, small numbers of American Indian students attended many of the district’s schools. The schools with the largest numbers of AIEP participants included Sunset and Molina high schools, and Peeler Elementary. Together, these three schools had more than 13% of the program’s participants.

By ethnicity, 50.5% of the students identified themselves as American Indian, while another 35.4% identified themselves as Hispanic. Although not all
students who participated in AIEP were identified as American Indian by ethnicity in district databases, all participants claimed an affiliation with one of the American Indian tribal nations.

Nearly 72% of AIEP participants were from economically disadvantaged families (defined by eligibility for the federal school lunch program).

**Program Outcomes**

The charts below display the passing rates in reading and mathematics on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests for AIEP students, compared with overall district passing rates.

Figure 1 displays passing rates in TAKS reading/language arts for AIEP participants and the district overall. The figure divides the students into three grade groupings: grades 3-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-11. In all three groupings, AIEP participants passed at slightly higher rates than the district. Passing rates for AIEP students were 87.8%, grades 3-5; 92.4%, grades 6-8; and 91.1%, grades 9-11. For the district, passing rates were 82.3%, grades 3-5; 85%, grades 6-8; and 84.8%, grades 9-12.

Figure 2 displays passing rates in TAKS mathematics for students in AIEP and the entire district. The comparison reveals that AIEP students passed the TAKS mathematics test at a higher rate than student across the district as a whole. Passing rates in mathematics for both AIEP students and the district at large display similar trends. Among both groups, passing rates in mathematics were the highest in elementary grades and lower in middle school and high school grades.

**Plans for 2009-2010**

AIEP was scheduled to receive $126,695 in grant funds for the 2009-2010 school year and serve an estimated 664 students. The program plans to emphasize the district’s Southwest Elementary Learning Community and its feeder middle and high schools. Data on 2008-09 students indicate that more than 40% of AIEP participants attended schools in the Southwest Elementary and West Secondary learning communities.

Although AIEP plans to emphasize campuses in the southwest part of the district, it will serve campuses in which 5 or more American Indian students are enrolled.

For more information on this report, contact Shane Hall at 972-925-6473.