The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) developed the Barbara M. Manns Education Center to reduce the dropout rate among middle school students. Manns was designed to be an alternative school for over-age, eighth-grade students who were behind on courses or who had been retained. The school began accepting students during the 2011-12 school year. The Manns schedule was designed to accommodate approximately 200 students during six, six-week sessions utilizing an adjusted curriculum.

**Purpose and Scope of Evaluation**

This report summarizes demographic, academic, and student support services data for the 2011-12 school year for the Manns Education Center. The scope of this plan included evaluating the Manns Education Center implementation process with regards to their first year of operation in accordance with the goals outlined in program documents. This evaluation report includes:

- A description of the characteristics of the student population served at Manns Education Center.
- An examination of students’ academic achievement at the campus.
- A summary of student support services provided at Manns.

**Student Characteristics**

There were 162 students enrolled in Manns during the 2011-12 school year. Manns served only eighth grade students. The majority of Manns students were 16 years old (69%), Hispanic (59%) or African American (38%), male (61%), and were English proficient (62%).

The majority of students attended school less than 90 percent of the time during the first (56%) and second (60%) semesters and over the full school year (58%).

Less than a quarter of students attended school between 95 percent and 100 percent of the time (22%).

Manns students attended school about 81 percent of the time on average. Only nine students were potential dropouts from Manns during the 2011-12 school year. They were no longer attending the school by the end of the school year and no transfer data was available in Chancery for those students indicating they had dropped out.

**Student Academic Achievement**

Average final scores for courses taken at Manns ranged from about 62 percent to just above 83 percent. Science 8 and US Studies 8 were the only two courses with average final scores higher than 70 percent. Though average scores were low, the majority of students passed five of the seven courses in which they were enrolled. Students did not perform as well in Reading Mastery 8 (29% passing) and Touch Systems Data Entry (41% passing).

The average raw scores for the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading and math exams were around 10 and 13, respectively. Some students scored a zero on the exams, bringing down the average score.

About 90 percent of Manns students were promoted to the ninth grade in the 2012-13 school year. Of those, 39 percent were listed as being between schools. Of the seven percent of students retained as eight graders, all were identified as being between schools.

Four students (3%) did not return to the Dallas ISD school system for the 2012-13 school year.

**Social Service Provision**

During the first semester, the counselor spent the majority of her time providing student support or counseling (36% and 31%, respectively). About 20 percent of the counselor’s time was spent on enrollment issues. During the second semester the counselor spent the most time providing counseling services (37%) and student support (15%).

Sixteen percent of visits with the counselor were for scheduling issues.

The majority of students were only served once during the first semester (70%) with one student being served four times. The counselor at Manns did not provide an adequate list of services provided for the second semester.

Student ID was missing for 156 out of the 235 entries. Without student ID there was no way to determine the number of times each student received assistance. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the counselor needed additional assistance to deal with the varying social service needs of Manns students.

In most cases, student discipline improved between the first and second semester. During the first semester, the most common offenses were disrespect...
of school personnel (n=93), classroom disruptions (n=56), profanity or obscene gestures towards personnel (n=29), and fighting (n=26). These same offenses were still most common during the second semester but occurred less often. Classroom disruption and disrespect of school personnel were the most common offenses across both semesters.

Anecdotal evidence suggested that the school would benefit from additional social service workers to aid in dealing with behavioral issues and other emotional and social needs of this at-risk student population.

Professional Development

The evaluator sent a link to an online professional development survey to all alternative education campuses including Patton. The survey was open and available for staff to complete from May 1st through May 21st, 2012. Seventy-eight teachers and twelve other staff such as academic coordinators, teaching assistants, and counselors completed the survey. Respondents described the student populations with whom they worked and described what professional development topics related to working in alternative education would be useful to them in the future.

Respondents reported that the students with whom they worked were at-risk students, academic low performers, behind on credits and over-age for their grade level, came from low socioeconomic backgrounds, had attendance and truancy issues, and had behavior issues and special needs such as lacking social skills, having stress and anger management difficulties, drug dependency issues, and weak interpersonal skills when relating to peers and adults. Several respondents indicated that students had the potential to be good students but had too many academic, social and behavioral deficits to be successful.

The most common request was for behavior modification training. This included training in areas regarding drug and alcohol abuse, dealing with difficult family issues, teaching social skills, understanding the affects of poverty on students’ well being, teaching stress/anger management, teaching conflict resolution, and dealing with bullying. Other requests were for training regarding academic issues such as motivating students, special education issues, teaching multiple grades in one classroom, academic strategies for at-risk students, classroom management techniques, motivating students and keeping them engaged, incentive ideas for students that do not cost any money, individualized instruction, dealing with different learning styles, developing project-based curricula, dealing with poor reading skills, how to boost attendance, teaching students with large gaps in learning, use of technology in the classroom, and working with over-age students. There were also requests for training on how to teach parenting skills and how get students engaged in career and advanced education planning and goal setting.

Recommendations

There were four recommendations as a result of this evaluation.

1. Determine the amount of the time the counselor spends on administrative work versus providing hands-on counseling services or social services to students. If necessary, increase the resources available to better provide necessary social services to students.

2. Increase professional development opportunities for teaching staff focusing on behavior modification, dealing with the academic needs of at-risk students, and the social and emotional needs of these students.

3. Review student’s final course grades, STAAR scores to determine where the academic curriculum could be strengthened or additional tutoring or academic services added.

4. Review behavior and discipline data to determine where programs could be implemented to decrease particular offenses.

5. Determine how many 2011-12 Manns students continued to the ninth grade in the 2012-13 school year.

Additional information may be obtained by consulting the Barbara M. Manns Education Center Report, EA12-523-2, which can be found at http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/15252.