At-a-Glance

In line with Dallas Independent School District’s (Dallas ISD) vision to educate all students for success, the African American Success Initiative (AASI) was created to address poor academic performance and achievement among African American students. While AASI’s mission acknowledged Dallas ISD’s commitment to the achievement of all students, it clarified the program’s specific purpose which was to eliminate the achievement gap between its African American students and other groups, and provide enhanced access to opportunities.

The objective of the AASI program was to close the achievement gap by ensuring that African American students’ academic, social, and cultural needs were being met as they engaged in rigorous and relevant instruction, while striving to become college and workforce ready. African American Success Initiative (AASI) program activities were coordinated, overseen and implemented by an advisory committee consisting of Dallas ISD staff from various district departments (i.e. Curriculum and Instruction, Social Studies, and Mathematics), central staff, and campuses.

During the 2012-13 school year, AASI funding was utilized to support student and staff activities that focused on the academic and cultural needs of students of color. African American Success Initiative programs and services were available to teachers and students (regardless of their identified race or ethnicity) at schools across all Dallas ISD divisions. The Title I 2012-13 program workscope allocation for this component was $505,182.

The focus of 2012-13 AASI evaluation was to 1) describe the characteristics of AASI participants and program activities and 2) examine the impact of program participation on student achievement.

Program Activities

In February of 2013, executive directors and principals within target feeder patterns (Lincoln, Madison, Pinkston, and South Oak Cliff) attended the AASI Principals’ Training. The professional development workshop provided an opportunity for attendees to discuss district core belief practices, hear an overview of the AASI program and its activities, learn new ways to create a culture of high expectations and best practices for African American students from other district staff and teachers, and participate in data analysis, action planning and next steps for their specific campuses.

Dr. Sharroky Hollie was the keynote speaker at AASI’s Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Strategies seminar held in April of 2013. Dr. Hollie is the executive director of the Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning, a non-profit organization that provides professional development to educators desiring to become culturally responsive. The training was an overview of culturally relevant strategies and interventions discussed in Dr. Hollie’s book *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning*. More specifically, attendees learned in greater detail about Hollie’s seven steps to becoming culturally and linguistically responsive:

1) Identify your underserved or bad customer service.
2) Turn on your deficit monitor or know where your biases are.
3) Distinguish objectively and clearly between race and culture through an anthropological lens.
4) Develop an empathy for the “rings of culture” or complexity of culture.
5) Be aware and sensitive to research-based, unaccepted languages and their sounds, rules, and vocabularies.
6) Recognize where culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy can be infused into your teaching.
7) Provide regular and consistent opportunities for situational appropriateness in your teaching.

Participation was voluntary and teachers and staff at all Dallas ISD campuses were eligible to attend the seminar. About 187 district teachers and staff attended AASI’s Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning Strategies workshop. Additionally, all
participants received a copy of Dr. Hollie’s book to conduct training on their campuses.
The African American Success Initiative (AASI) student advocate program placed at-risk elementary, middle and high school students (3rd-12th grade) with student advocates (district teachers or staff). Student advocates served as mentors for program students and were responsible for; (1) connecting students to resources, (2) assuring their attendance at district and community events related to their achievement, (3) empowering them with information that would assist them in choosing and completing academically rigorous coursework and programs, and (4) assisting with college and financial aid applications. African American Success Initiative advocates were required to meet with their mentees weekly and received a stipend ($500.00) for participating in the AASI student advocate program.

**Program Goals**

The Evaluation and Assessment Department (E&A) provided AASI committee members with student, campus, and feeder pattern data that assisted them in formulating performance targets and goals for their program. Performance goals for the AASI, and thus for each of the four feeder patterns, are outlined below.


2) Increase graduation rate by three percentage points by 2014-15.

3) Increase ACT scores by 1.5 points by 2014-15.

4) Increase SAT scores by 120 points by 2014-15.

Performance data from SY 2011-2012 were used for each Dallas ISD target feeder pattern to establish a baseline for the four measures (see attached).

**Results**

In 2012-13, the AASI student advocate program was not implemented until late in the school year, April 2013. Furthermore, comprehensive data outlining student or advocate participation rates and campus specific mentor-mentee activities were not available for review by evaluation staff. As a result, we are not able to conduct a meaningful evaluation of the AASI program at this time. While we have presented the results of achievement gaps for each target feeder pattern for 2012-13 (see attached), we do so for the sole purpose of informing program staff regarding changes in achievement gaps compared to the 2011-12 baseline and 2012-13 performance targets. We caution the reader to reserve judgment of the AASI program until the program has been fully implemented for at least two academic years and implementation and achievement data are collected and analyzed thoroughly.

Data for graduation rates as well as ACT and SAT scores for SY 2012-2013 were not available at the time of publication of this report.

**Summary and Recommendations**

During the 2012-13 school year, AASI funding was utilized to provide culturally-relevant professional development opportunities to Dallas ISD teachers and staff, and to implement the student advocate program at campuses district-wide. AASI program activities were aimed at meeting the academic, social, and cultural needs of students of color.

Due to the late implementation of the program and lack of data on program activities we are not able to conduct a thorough evaluation for 2012-13.

Recommendations for African American Success Initiative program: (1) begin program implementation early so that students can benefit from services provided by mentors which is expected to have a positive impact on their academic achievement; (2) monitor and document program activities on a regular and continual basis for the lifetime of the program; and (3) ensure the availability of quality implementation data so that evaluation staff can provide relevant and useful data for the purposes of program improvement and so that program outcomes can be more appropriately determined and measured.

Recommendations for evaluation staff: (1) collect data regarding the quality and usefulness of the professional development provided to educators by the AASI program; (2) collect and analyze data on the frequency with which educators implement culturally responsive strategies in their schools and classrooms; (3) collect and analyze data regarding the student advocate program; and (4) collect and analyze all other data relevant to AASI program activities.

For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457.