At-a-Glance

Big Thought, a non-profit organization in partnership with the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), provided creative learning to students and teachers. The collaboration was an expansion of several partnerships between the Dallas ISD, the City of Dallas, community organizations, and Big Thought to integrate resources and increase creative learning in schools and neighborhoods. In 2012-13, Big Thought managed the Thriving Minds 21st Century after school program and partnered with the district to support a summer program to students. This partnership has improved arts learning in Dallas public schools and has gained national attention. In fact, the RAND Corporation selected this partnership to participate in a study that examines the effects of summer learning loss. This study is funded by The Wallace Foundation and focuses on rising 4th grade students.

Thriving Minds Summer Camp Program

In the summer of 2013, the Dallas ISD partnered with Big Thought to host the Thriving Minds Summer Camp program for students in grades K-5 from 81 district schools. Elementary students from these locations that were in danger of retention, attending 21st Century after school programs, and eligible Wallace rising 4th grade students were targeted for participation.

The Thriving Minds Summer Camp was provided Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Eligible students attended summer camp at one of ten district elementary schools for five weeks. Transportation was provided from the student's home school. Students were provided breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day. Students completed coursework in English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies with certified teachers. Core subject teachers teamed up with certified fine arts teachers and campus integration specialists to create an integrated curriculum in all subject areas. Students would rotate through several enrichment programs each week that included physical education, dance, music, and visual arts.

Wallace rising 4th grade students

In February 2013, all rising 4th grade students received an opportunity to apply for the Thriving Minds Summer Camp. Applications were received by the Evaluation and Assessment department to determine student eligibility. Students at risk for grade retention or those who participated in the 21st Century after school program were ineligible for Wallace rising 4th grade spots. Over 2,000 applications were received from parents, with eligible rising 4th grade students, who were interested in the voluntary summer program. Each of the ten Thriving Minds Summer Camp locations had limited space available for these students. A random lottery was conducted to determine who was selected to attend. Students that were selected to participate were granted the opportunity to attend the summer program for two years. All eligible students would complete an assessment in the fall of 2013 and another in 2014. Additional information will be collected by RAND staff to evaluate the effects of summer learning loss throughout the summer and the years that followed.

Results

The Thriving Minds Summer Camp program was one of five summer enrichment programs across the country to participate in this study. The RAND Corporation will provide the district a report every October that includes a program evaluation to strengthen the summer program it provides. Final results of the study will not be released until the study has concluded.

For more information, contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457. Information about other Dallas ISD summer school programs may be found in EA13-160-2 or EA13-160-4 summer school reports.