Imagine 2020 Initiative: 2013-14

At-a-Glance

Imagine 2020 is the Dallas ISD’s Strategic Feeder Pattern initiative, designed to serve as a pilot for transforming the entire district in accordance with the Destination 2020 improvement plan. The initiative identified three feeder patterns – Pinkston, Lincoln, and Madison – comprised of 14 elementary schools and 7 secondary. The initiative injected additional personnel and other resources to produce improvements in classroom instruction, student achievement, student support, school climate, and family and community engagement. The budget for the first year of Imagine 2020 was $8,841,266.

The Imagine 2020 approach to school improvement employed a three-pronged approach that can be summarized as follows: Support, Innovate, and Engage. Support means changing school staffing to improve teaching and learning systems, resulting in greater support for students, staff, and parents. Innovate means differentiating curriculum and instruction so as to better individualize and personalize instructional systems. Engage means greater efforts to engage parents and community members as meaningful partners in the education of Dallas ISD children. Through these three elements, Imagine 2020 expects to achieve a collective impact that will improve the academic success, and college and career prospects of its students.

Evaluation Purpose and Scope

This At-a-Glance provides a brief overview of the Imagine 2020 Strategic Feeder Pattern initiative, assessing the first-year implementation and describing early outcomes of the program. The evaluation team met with the Imagine 2020 executive director to identify areas of emphasis for the overall evaluation of the initiative. Those areas of emphasis included the following: student support services staff, the optional extended day program, accelerated instruction, in-school tutoring, and parent engagement. The evaluation also reports the first-year outcomes of Imagine 2020, compared to districtwide results.

Support

To boost administrative support, 30 additional assistant principals were hired to work in the Imagine 2020 schools. To provide additional instructional support, the district hired 28 department chairs in the core subjects of math, science, social studies, and English language arts for the seven secondary campuses. The department chairs taught for half a day, then provided professional development, coaching, and mentoring the other half of the day.

Student support services were another important element of Imagine 2020. The initiative employed two student advocate coordinators, six urban specialists, four school psychologists, and two social workers, to provide greater social and emotional supports. These additional personnel enabled Imagine 2020 schools to respond proactively to issues that hamper success in school, such as low attendance and discipline problems. In addition to the student support services, two college and career readiness coordinators provided college and career information to students.

Innovate

The Optional Extended Day program required schools to be open for an additional hour each school day – either before or after the regular instructional day – to offer additional learning opportunities and enrichment activities. The additional hour was mandatory for campus staff, but optional for students. Participants in the Optional Extended Day were lower performing than their peers, but improved their STAAR scores over the previous school year at a higher rate than nonparticipants, especially in math. It was unclear to what extent this improvement could be isolated to the extended day, as opposed to other elements of Imagine 2020.

In-School Tutoring, also known as Project Amplify, was another significant part of the Imagine 2020 goal of differentiating instruction. Three vendors – Group Excellence, Reading Partners, and Readers 2 Leaders – tutored Imagine 2020 students. Group Excellence tutored secondary students in math, while Reading Partners and Readers 2 Leaders tutored elementary students in reading. Students in grades 8 and 9 who received in-school tutoring showed improvements in math achievement on the STAAR and STAAR EOC in Algebra. Elementary students tutored by Reading Partners showed increases of more than 50 percent in some cases in both STAAR reading and math. Readers 2 Leaders tutored students in grades K-2 at Pinkston feeder campuses, and students at most of these schools generally performed lower than their peers in reading comprehension on the ITBS.

Students in Accelerated Instruction (AI) at Edison and Dade improved their STAAR performance in reading and math at higher rates than nonparticipants. As shown in Figure 1, AI students had lower performance levels than other students but showed gains in proficiency rates of greater than 50 percent. The analysis could not control for other factors that may affect STAAR performance; therefore, it is unclear how
much of their improvement can be attributed to participation in accelerated instruction.

Students in the accelerated instruction at Dade and Edison showed higher attendance rates and lower rates of disciplinary referrals, compared to the previous school year.

Figure 1: STAAR Proficiency Rates for AI and non-AI Students, 2013 and 2014

Engage

Imagine 2020’s Engage component emphasized forging stronger partnerships among schools, parents, and community members. Key activities of the Engage component included the Student Advocacy Management (SAM) model, parent engagement and education, and out-of-school programs, such as field trips and on- and off-campus community partnerships.

Each of the 21 schools formed a SAM team to provide mentoring, student advocacy, and differentiated services for students identified as Tier 3, or most severely at-risk because of academic, attendance, and discipline concerns. Tier 3 consisted of 5 to 10 percent of the students in the Imagine 2020 schools.

SAM was designed to support students and staff on issues affecting students in urban schools, such as drugs, gangs, teen pregnancy, truancy, and homelessness. The SAM model represents an important opportunity to intervene in issues that hamper school achievement. However, SAM meetings at some campuses were not well attended and lacked leadership from a campus administrator, who has the authority to direct other team members to carry out needed actions.

Parent engagement activities included home visits, “parent universities” and fairs, workforce development resources, and other types of support. As shown in Table 1 below, the Office of Family and Community Engagement met four of the department’s five goals.

Table 1: 2013-14 Imagine 2020 Parent Engagement Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator of Success</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Produce a monthly campus newsletter</td>
<td>80% of campuses</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent representative sitting on the District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)</td>
<td>66% of campuses</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase percentage of parents registered for Parent Portal</td>
<td>Increase by 45%</td>
<td>86% of campuses met goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and launch a parent center</td>
<td>80% of campuses</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine 2020 campuses will have an active Parent Teacher Association (PTA), independent Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) or parent group</td>
<td>70% of campuses</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Year 1 Outcomes

Year 1 goals for Imagine 2020 included the following:

- Increasing STAAR and STAAR EOC passing rates by at least 10 percent in reading, math, and science among grades 5, 8, and 9
- Increasing STAAR writing passing rates by at least 10 percent among grades 4 and 7
- Increasing the proportion of seniors with college-ready SAT or ACT scores by at least 10 percent
- Achieving a FAFSA completion rate of at least 50 percent among seniors
- Achieving a 95 percent ApplyTexas or other college application completion rate among seniors

In grade 5 reading, Imagine 2020 schools showed a 3.2 percent decline in the rate of satisfactory performance, compared to a 3.6 percent decline for the district. In math, Imagine 2020 schools improved 12.7 percent, higher than the district, which showed a slight decline. In grade 8 reading, Imagine 2020’s performance was in line with districtwide results. Imagine 2020 schools fell 4 percentage points, while the district declined around 1 percentage point.

Writing scores in Imagine 2020 schools climbed 6.5 percent in grade 4, but declined 9 percent in grade 7. Districtwide writing results were virtually flat in grade 4 and fell 2.5 percentage points in grade 7.

On the grade 9 EOCs, Imagine 2020 schools improved their performance in algebra and biology by 9.1 percent and 12.7 percent, respectively. A restructuring of the English/language arts tests from separate reading and writing tests into a single assessment prevented year-to-year comparisons for this subject.

On college readiness measures, all three Imagine 2020 high schools met or exceeded goals for ApplyTexas completion, and two of the three met
FAFSA completion goals. However, few seniors at the three schools met district benchmarks for the SAT and ACT exams.

**Recommendations**

Just a few of the recommendations based on the findings of the evaluation were to:

- Improve communication among Imagine 2020 staff and increase collaboration
- Review SAM team activities to increase effectiveness of these teams (i.e., ensure the appropriate administrative staff members are present)
- Develop a process for collecting optional extended day participation data
- Clearly identify criteria for selecting students for the accelerated instruction program.

The full evaluation report on Imagine 2020 contains more in-depth discussion of the program and recommendations. For more information, refer to the final evaluation report, EA14-530-2, which can be found at [http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888](http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888).