African American Success Initiative (AASI) is a program designed to provide supplemental services and resources to Title 1 campuses in order to 1) bring awareness to the achievement gap between African American and white students and 2) assist in creating a culture of high expectations for all students in the district.

Program Background
A revised program was phased in across schools beginning in SY 2012-13 and expanded to all Title I schools in the district for SY 2014-15. The program received $525,000 Title I, Part A funding to implement the following four program components:
- Student mentorship program
- College and career access and readiness events
- Strategic math and reading tutorials (S.M.a.R.T.)
- Professional development

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation
The evaluation measured the extent to which program components of the AASI were implemented with fidelity and met expected outcomes. This was based on a review of available program documents submitted by campuses and data obtained from surveys to student mentors and participants of the professional development training sessions.

Student Mentorship Program
School principals identified 335 staff to serve as AASI student mentors for SY 2014-15. Most student mentors were African American (87.8%) and classified as professional staff employed as either teachers (70.7%) or school counselors (12.2%). Collectively, these student mentors served 1,788 students, primarily enrolled at the elementary school level (71.3%). The majority of student mentees were also reported to be African American (85.7%), the target population for the program, but students from other races and ethnicities also participated in the student mentorship program.

A program goal was to have at least one identified student mentor at all Title I schools but only 79.2 percent of all qualified district schools were able to do so (88.0% if magnets and special programs are excluded). This was an increase over the 70 schools that participated in the program during SY 2013-14 but short of the 100% goal set forth by the program.

Some of the non-participating school principals suggested that program information was distributed too late in the school year to adjust master schedules or that they were implementing alternative student mentorship programs on their campuses.

Staff identified as AASI student mentors were expected to complete a training on the *Habits of Mind* curriculum which was to be used in bi-weekly meetings with student mentees. Both face-to-face and online training options were made available to student mentors (Figure 1).

The training was favorably received but 44.0 percent of the district's identified student mentors did not complete curriculum training and subsequently did not receive stipends for their work with student mentees. This contributed to a substantial portion of unused funds allocated to the program ($406,115.17 as of June 12, 2015).

Student mentors were also expected to meet with student mentees between 10 and 15 times over the school year. Half of the student mentors met or exceeded this expectation (49.6%) but many also reported meeting with student less often (50.4%). Some student mentors were not identified until later in the school year and those that were identified earlier did not receive training until early November which limited meeting opportunities with students.

A primary aim of the student mentorship program was to improve scores on statewide assessments and close the achievement gap between African American students and the state white demographic. Propensity score analysis was used to identify a well-matched comparison group of non-participants to evaluate the effects of participation in the student mentorship program. There were small positive gains...
in STAAR 3-8 scaled reading scores of AASI student mentee females where other groups (i.e., AASI males, male and female non-participants) seemed to indicate some level of decline from the previous school year. There was no evidence to support the student mentorship program resulted in any increased level of student achievement on the STAAR EOCs but there was also a smaller number of high school level student mentees reported by participating schools.

Figure 2: Number and Percent of Student Mentors by Training

Career and College Readiness Events
Of the 1,788 students served by the program, 102 were identified as junior and senior level students and were expected to participate in college and career access and readiness events. Responses from an end of year survey to student mentors indicated most participated in a college fair (55.0%), resume information sessions (40.0%) or a local college tour (40.0%). The percentage of senior level AASI student mentees who submitted college applications through Apply Texas (78.6%) was also found to be higher than the percentage of African American students that submitted applications at the same schools (73.6%).

Table 1: Number and Percent of Student Mentors by Training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>AASI Student Mentees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senior AA Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyline</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuell</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adamson</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinkston</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conrad</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garza</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

professional development training on Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning was offered to campus staff May 21-22, 2015. The goal of the training was to help participants articulate and implement strategies to effectively meet the cultural learning needs of all students. At least 85 percent of respondents indicated (agreed and strongly agreed) that the training session was timely, specific and content-focused, with clearly stated objectives, and relevant to their work with students. Survey responses were also more favorable over a similar training offered the previous year. However, many respondents (49.4%) indicated they still had concerns about implementing principles of CLRT terms and concepts. There were also concerns raised about timing of the training.

Recommendations
In general, the student mentorship program received positive feedback when information was available from schools and mentors. There was also some data to suggest some improvement on STAAR 3-8 Reading for females as a result of participation in the program. However, a greater level of implementation and documentation is needed by schools and mentors. The following summary recommendations are offered to program staff:

- Conduct training earlier in the school year.
- Increase the utilization of online training.
- Adjust incentives for student mentors.
- Better utilize existing technology platforms for district communication.
- Track student performance longitudinally.
- Re-evaluate mentoring activities with male student mentees.
- Increase the number of male student mentors.
- Consider evaluating the program against other standardized assessments and non-cognitive outcomes.

For more information, please refer to the full report EA15-155-2 found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.