The Dallas Independent School District's (Dallas ISD) Department of Summer Learning and Extended-Day Services provided summer programming for 5,139 elementary school, 2,873 middle school, and 3,796 high school students. At the elementary level, students attended one of four types of programs: traditional, Thriving Minds Summer Camps, Summer Learning Lab (SLL) teacher training sites, or a Teach For America (TFA) training site. The Dallas ISD provided a traditional, remedial Summer Learning Program for elementary students at seven sites. The Thriving Minds Summer Camp, a partnership between the district and Big Thought, provided afternoon arts enrichment at five sites. Two elementary sites hosted Summer Learning Lab (SLL) teacher training, and one site hosted Teach For America's (TFA) teacher training.\textsuperscript{1}

The Middle School Summer Learning Program offered SLL teacher training and TFA training sites in addition to the traditional summer program. The High School Summer Learning Program remained similar to previous years and offered opportunities for credit recovery, test preparation, and acceleration for English Language Learners at nine campuses. The high school sites were also classified as traditional, SLL, or TFA.

Interpretations of summer attendance data are limited at the elementary and middle school levels. Fifth- and eighth-grade students who failed the reading State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) during the regular school year were required to participate in the Student Success Initiative, a remediation and test preparation program, prior to testing a third time during the summer. Students attending the Student Success Initiative program who also qualified to attend the Summer Learning Program were not able to attend the first four days of the Summer Learning Program. Because the two summer programs used separate attendance tracking systems, first-week attendance for these students should have been transferred to the database for the Summer Learning Program. This did not happen for many students, though it is unclear how many were affected.

Home schools erroneously sent report cards to parents with messages stating that students should attend the Summer Learning Program when they did not meet the criteria for attendance. Additionally, some students who met the criteria received report cards indicating that it was not necessary to attend the summer program. During the third week, each summer campus conducted an audit of attending students, informing many that they could not continue attending. Some students who should have attended began during the third week. Because students could stop attending the Summer Learning Program for many reasons, the evaluator was unable to conclusively determine the number of students affected.

### Elementary School Summer Learning

The district provided four elementary extended-year programs in summer 2015. The district partnered with Big Thought to provide the Thriving Minds Elementary Summer Camp at five elementary schools.\textsuperscript{2} Seven elementary schools provided the traditional program. Two sites hosted the SLL teacher training, and one site hosted the TFA training. The curriculum in core subjects did not differ across program types. The teacher training sites (SLL and TFA) provided mentors and professional development for novice teachers and alternative certification interns, who delivered many of the lessons. The Thriving Minds Summer Camp provided arts enrichment during the afternoons.

Observation results revealed that class sizes ranged from 10.6 students at Thriving Minds Summer Camps to 13.7 students at the TFA site. At SLL sites evaluators observed up to 7 teachers in a classroom with as few as 6 students. Technology use was typically limited to the teacher using laptops and projectors to display problems on the board. In some traditional and Thriving Minds' classrooms, students used tablets, computers, or laptops to access reading and mathematics software. Teachers monitored student progress on a separate computer.

Training teachers or alternative certification interns at SLL sites were leading instruction in 75 percent of the observed classrooms. At the TFA site, the TFA interns were leading instruction in 38 percent of the observed classrooms.

Overall, 5,139 students attended at least one day of the Summer Learning Program. Exactly 2,318 students attended the traditional program; 1,895 students attended the Thriving Minds Summer Camp, 463 students attended the SLL sites, and 454 students

\textsuperscript{1} The teacher training sites were not fundamentally different for students in terms of core instruction, but did provide experienced teachers to mentor other teachers and alternative certification interns with both the Dallas ISD and TFA, allowing inexperienced teachers

\textsuperscript{2} These campuses were identified from an existing partnership with Big Thought for after-school programming.
attended the TFA site. Across all types of programs
5,017 students were recommended to attend because
they were at risk for retention. To be promoted, these
students must have attended at least 90 percent of
the instructional days. At Thriving Minds sites, 59 per-
cent of the recommended students met this criterion. The
percentages were lower at the SLL sites (56%), the TFA
site (51%), and the traditional sites (45%).

Students took an *Assessment of Course Performance*
(*ACP*) in language arts and mathematics at the
conclusion of the summer program. The overall
average score in mathematics was about 67, below the
passing standard of 70. The mathematics passing rate
was 37 percent. About 39 percent of the students taking
the Reading/Language Arts exam passed (*M* = 64.5).
ELL students took the *ACP* for Reading/Language Arts
English/Spanish, and averaged 67.4 points with 47
percent passing.

**Middle School Summer Learning**

The district provided the middle school Summer
Learning Program in six traditional middle schools, two
SLLs, one TFA training site, and the Learning
Alternative Center for Empowering Youth (an
alternative campus). The programs operated from 9:00
a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and students enrolled in two core
content courses depending on need. Each core content
class lasted 120 minutes. To end the day, students
received teacher designed academic enrichment for 60
minutes. Exactly 2,109 students attended at least one
day at a traditional site, 483 attended a SLL teacher
training site, 221 attended the TFA training site, and 60
students attended the alternative campus. The 2,873
students enrolled in 5,745 courses.

The average third-week class sizes, as revealed by
classroom observations, ranged from 8.4 students at
the TFA site to 13.0 students at the SLL sites. At SLL
sites evaluators observed several teachers in
classrooms with as few as four students. Class sizes
were generally lower than 15 students, but evaluators
did observe classes at the SLL and traditional sites with
over 22 students.

Most students were engaged in learning at the SLL sites
where multiple teachers were common in every
classroom. The proportion was smaller at traditional
sites (57%). At the TFA site, less than half of the
students were engaged in 89 percent of the observed
classes.

Only one teacher was in each observed traditional
classroom. Mentor teachers observed training teachers
or alternative certification interns at the SLL and TFA
sites. The training teachers and interns were leading
instruction in 69 percent of the SLL classrooms and 78
percent of the TFA classrooms.

To pass a course, students must have attended at least
90 percent of the instructional days (18 of 20). At the
traditional and SLL campuses, 54 percent of the
students met this criterion. The percentages were lower
at the TFA site (48%) and the alternative campus
(32%). Students at the SLL and TFA sites attended 15.8
days, on average. This is below the required attendance
criterion of 18 days. Students at the traditional sites
attended 15.0 days, on average, and students at the
alternative campus attended an average of 12.9 days.

Students took an *ACP* in their respective enrolled
subjects at the conclusion of the summer program and
the exam counted for five percent of the student's
overall grade. A large percentage of students did not
pass the *ACP* exams for each course. Overall, the
passing rates for all courses were below 50 percent,
meaning the majority of test takers did not pass each
exam. Disregarding program type, passing rates
ranged from 26 percent (Texas Studies 7) to 46 percent
(Science 7).

The average *ACP* scores were generally similar across
program types. Language arts passing rates ranged
from 30 percent of sixth-grade students at the TFA site
to 46 percent of eighth grade students at traditional
sites. In mathematics, 19 percent of eighth-grade and
58 percent of students passed at the TFA site. Nearly
23 percent of sixth-grade science students passed the
*ACP* at the TFA site, and over 52 percent passed the
course at SLL sites. *ACPs* in four courses averaged a
score higher than 70: Math 8 (*M* = 70.3) and Science 7
(*M* = 71.2) at the SLL sites, and Math 6 (*M* = 70.1) and
Texas Studies 7 at the TFA site (*M* = 70.7).

**High School Summer Learning**

The district provided the high school Summer Learning
Program to 3,796 students in seven traditional middle
schools, two SLLs, one TFA training site, and Village
Fair (an alternative campus). The programs operated
from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and students enrolled in as
many as three courses depending on need. Each class
lasted 100 minutes. Exactly 2,622 students attended
at least one day at a traditional site, 632 attended a SLL
teacher training site, 493 attended the TFA training site,
and 49 students attended the alternative campus.

Evaluation staff visited classrooms hosting a variety of
courses during the third week of the program.
Evaluators took notes in the following areas: subject,
number of teachers and students, classroom setting,
class lesson and instruction, and use of technology in
the lesson.

The third-week class sizes ranged from 3 to 19 students
at the TFA site, from 2 to 30 students at the SLL sites,
and from 4 to 25 students at the traditional sites.
Average class sizes were consistent across program
types with TFA classrooms smallest (*M* = 10.6) and SLL
classes largest (*M* = 11.8).

Only one teacher was in each observed traditional
classroom. Mentor teachers were often observing
training teachers or alternative certification interns at the SLL (87%) and TFA sites (71%). The training teachers and interns led instruction in 73 percent of the SLL classrooms and 57 percent of the TFA classrooms.

Most students were engaged in learning at the SLL (73%) and TFA sites (72%), where multiple teachers were common in every classroom. The proportion was smaller at traditional sites (66%).

To pass a course, students must have attended at least 90 percent of the instructional days (22 of 24). Fifty-four percent of the students met this criterion at the TFA site. The percentages were lower at the SLL sites (40%), traditional sites (39%), and the alternative campus (20%). Students at the SLL and TFA sites attended nearly 19 days, on average. This is below the required attendance criterion of 22 days. Students at the traditional sites attended an average of 17.8 days, on average, and students at the alternative campus attended an average of 13.2 days.

Students took an ACP in each course at the conclusion of the summer program. The exam counted for fifteen percent of the overall grade. Less than half the students passed the ACP in 14 of 34 courses. Separated by program type, most students in traditional and SLL courses passed 18 of the 34 ACP exams, and the majority of students in TFA courses passed 25 of the 34 exams.

**Recommendations**

*Ensure students in the summer programs at all levels (elementary, middle, and high) have mastered the course content.* ACP passing rates ranged from 37 to 47 percent for elementary students and from 26 to 46 percent for middle school students. The passing rates for 20 of the 34 high school ACP exams were below 50 percent. This shows that many students may not have mastered the content by the end of the summer session.

*District departments should continue to cooperate in refining student enrollment and attendance tracking in the summer database.* As it stands, fifth- and eighth grade students enrolled in the Student Success Initiative (remediation and test preparation for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness exams) may have been absent during the first week of the Summer Learning Program. Because attendance at the two programs was tracked separately, it was not possible to determine if these students should have been given credit for the first week’s attendance in the Summer Learning Program. Such improvements would produce more efficient operations and reduce possible reporting errors.

*Continue to push for home schools to enroll students in the Summer Learning Program before final report cards are delivered.* Schools should notify parents prior to the last day of school about the possibility that a student would be required to attend summer school so that students will attend from the start of the Summer Learning Program. Accurately assessing which students need to attend the program will enable district and school administrators to make staffing and operational decisions more efficiently.

*Continue to direct summer principals and principals of the host schools in preparing schools for the summer session.* Over the past two years, summer sites have improved the organization and cleanliness of campuses and classrooms.

The full final evaluation report for the 2014-2015 Summer Learning Program can be found at [http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888](http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888). For more information, contact Program Evaluation at (972) 925-6457.