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At-a-Glance

During the 2013-14 school year, the Dallas ISD began a pilot for transforming the entire district in accordance with the district improvement plan, Destination 2020. The initiative was refined and expanded for the 2014-15 school year. The Imagine 2020 Initiative was made up of four high-needs feeder patterns – the Pinkston High School feeder in west Dallas, and the South Oak Cliff, Lincoln and Madison high school feeders in south Dallas. These four feeder patterns were comprised of 33 campuses total: 23 elementary, 6 middle, and 4 high schools. The Imagine 2020 Initiative focused on three areas: school staffing, curriculum and instruction, and parent and community engagement. Additional personnel and other resources were injected into these campuses to produce improvements in instruction, student achievement, student support, and school climate. The Imagine 2020 budget increased from $8.98 million in the 2013-14 school year to $11.76 million in 2014-15. This represented a 31 percent increase in funding, mostly due to the addition of the South Oak Cliff feeder pattern.

The Imagine 2020 approach to school improvement employed a three-pronged strategy 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.

Program Components

There were a few staffing changes within the Imagine 2020 initiative from 2013-14 to 2014-15. First, an assistant superintendent was specifically assigned to oversee the initiative. Second, the executive director position was replaced with a director position. Third, there was only one college and career readiness coordinator (there were two positions in 2013-14). Finally, urban specialists reported to campus principals rather than to the Director of Student Discipline. The curriculum and instruction component of Imagine 2020 remained the same for the 2014-15 school year. Professional development related to the Imagine 2020 initiative for the 2014-15 school year was optional.

Program goals remained relatively stable from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Instead of using the 2012-13 school year as a baseline for goals, Imagine 2020 schools used 2013-14 data as the baseline to determine whether they were meeting goals.

It is important to note that the Accelerating Campus Excellence Initiative (ACE), slated to begin in the 2015-16 school year with the goal of placing an effective teacher in every classroom in order to raise student achievement, will include four Imagine 2020 campuses: Thomas A. Edison Middle Learning Center, Billy Earl Dade, and Sarah Zumwalt middle schools, and Elisha M. Pease elementary school. The 2015-16 evaluation should make note of these campuses when comparing program implementation and campus outcomes.

Urban Specialists and Student Advocate Coordinators

Urban specialists were decentralized from being under the Director of Student Discipline in 2013-14 to reporting directly to campus principals in 2014-15. Student advocate coordinators continued to report to the Director of Student Discipline. Urban specialists were assigned to one high school or middle school within Imagine 2020. Student advocate coordinators were assigned to one feeder pattern within the initiative and served elementary schools within that feeder. Both urban specialists and student advocate coordinators worked with students on their campuses to address discipline and truancy concerns. They reported that their relationships with campus staff were positive (Figure 1); however, both groups indicated that they were asked to perform duties outside the scope of work outlined in their job descriptions.

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Figure 1: Quality of relationship with campus staff

Some examples included being asked to perform custodial duties, cafeteria duty, hall monitoring and
metal detector monitoring, traffic duty, and being assigned to committees which pulled them away from direct work with students. Urban specialists and student advocate coordinators also reported that they received less training this year than in the previous school year. When it came to participating in Student Advocacy Management team meetings (teams designed to support at-risk students on Imagine 2020 campuses), urban specialists and student advocate coordinators reported that meetings were not always run effectively, did not happen regularly, or did not have the required staff members present.

**Student Advocacy Management Model**

Student Advocacy Management (SAM) teams were developed to provide support services to at-risk students on Imagine 2020 campuses. At-risk students were classified as Tier 3 students and were identified as having three or more course failures, four or more discipline referrals, or six or more unexcused absences. At the time of this report, there were no rules identifying when a student could be removed from the Tier 3 list and there were no parameters identified for Tier 2 or Tier 1 students.

Imagine 2020 campuses used paper records to track the students served under the SAM model. In spring 2015, the evaluation team created and began using an electronic tracker using Microsoft Access; however, implementation proved problematic and use of the system was discontinued in lieu of determining a better method for electronically tracking data. Evaluation team representatives, along with Imagine 2020 leadership staff, met with staff from the district’s Management Information Systems department to discuss options for a more robust system.

Results of a SAM chair survey indicated that not all SAM teams were meeting on a regular basis and that the number of students served and average caseload per staff member varied. SAM chairs and SAM administrators were often at SAM meetings, but did not always attend. These two staff positions are required to attend all SAM meetings. The most common referral services used for students were Student Support Team (SST) referrals, Youth and Family Centers, and counselor referrals. SAM chairs indicated that the training they received was “good” or “fair” but that additional training would have been beneficial. It was clear that all SAM chairs were not familiar with the policies and procedures related to SAM. The Imagine 2020 leadership team did not have up-to-date rosters of SAM chairs at each campus. Figure 2 shows that the majority of SAM chairs reported that they were somewhat comfortable running meetings and that they believed the SAM teams were moderately or very effective (36% and 44%, respectively).

**Habits of Mind**

The Habits of Mind program was not implemented on Imagine 2020 campuses during the 2014-15 school year. Instead, the initiative focused on training campus staff on the program for implementation during the 2015-16 school year. Imagine 2020 leadership staff developed a training model that included four series covering the 16 Habits of Mind. Each series could have been provided more than once, depending on campus need. The evaluation team conducted training surveys throughout the year. Results indicated that staff were prepared to apply what they learned in training, though results were mixed when it came to making school changes as a result of training. Most staff had not been able to implement any of the Habits of Mind curriculum on their campuses during the 2014-15 school year. Not all staff who participated in training received the Habits of Mind book.

**1:1 Technology Initiative**

Sometimes referred to as blended learning, one-to-one (1:1) technology is a term used to describe the process by which each student on a campus receives a computer on a direct and continuous basis for use in instruction throughout the school day. The Imagine 2020 leadership team created the 1:1 Technology Taskforce at the beginning of the 2014-15 school year to develop an action plan for Imagine 2020 campuses. The action plan outlined parameters for implementing 1:1 technology on Imagine 2020 campuses.

The evaluation team developed a needs assessment survey to aid in the development of this plan. Survey results indicated that most respondents did not need help with laptops, desktops, projectors or cameras, but did need help with electronic whiteboards (they also requested information about new ways to use whiteboards.) Staff reported that they were not necessarily prepared to teach in a classroom where every student had a laptop and all instructional materials were delivered via computer.
Figure 3: How prepared are you to:

About 63 percent of respondents reported that professional development related to technology was fair or poor. Respondents reported that there were issues regarding support and capacity when it came to technology. Not all staff were able to get help with technology when they needed it and technology capacity issues such as poor internet service and inadequate device charging options were present. Teachers reported that they were using technology in their classrooms and that they were able to integrate technology with the curriculum.

**Required and Optional Initiatives**

The Imagine 2020 initiative did not have a method for documenting which optional and required programs were being implemented on Imagine 2020 campuses and to what degree. In response, the evaluation team developed an online survey, administered to campus principals, to solicit information about these programs. The most commonly implemented programs were the Perot Museum, Reasoning Mind, I-Station Reading, Big Four (learning objectives, demonstrations of learning, multiple response strategies, and purposeful instruction), and in-school tutoring programs. Principals reported that in-school tutoring and mandatory extended day were the biggest contributors to students’ success when it came to optional or required initiatives (it should be taken into consideration that 57% percent of responding campuses reported having full implementation of mandatory extended day – not all campuses were implementing this program fully).

**Year 2 Outcomes**

STAAR and STAAR EOC results were mixed. Students at Imagine 2020 high schools passed all of the STAAR EOC exams at lower rates than the district overall. Some elementary and middle schools showed improvements on STAAR exams by grade and subject. No one school had gains across all exams and grade levels. All four high schools lagged behind the district on meeting SAT and ACT Destination 2020 benchmark standards. All four high schools exceeded the 95 percent completion goals for FAFSA completions. Climate Survey results for spring 2015 showed that the Lincoln and Madison feeder patterns were above the district on all scales, while Pinkston performed below the district on all scales. The South Oak Cliff feeder pattern results were more mixed, with the feeder pattern being above the district on two of the scales and below the district on two scales. Student Perception Survey results showed that students in the Pinkston feeder pattern were above the district in grades 3 through 5 overall, while the other feeder patterns performed below the district average. In grades 6 through 12, all Imagine 2020 feeder patterns performed either above or equal to the district average overall. None of the Imagine 2020 schools, except the Dallas Environmental Science Academy met the Imagine 2020 attendance goals (high schools, 96%; middle schools, 97%; and elementary schools, 98%). The district also was below the set goals. Attendance rates remained stable from the 2013-14 school year. Imagine 2020 campuses struggled with disciplinary referrals. All four high schools and six middle schools had increases in the number of referrals from 2013-14 to 2014-15. Elementary schools fared better with 12 of the 23 schools decreasing the number of disciplinary referrals and 8 of those meeting the Imagine 2020 goal of a 20 percent decrease in referrals from 2013-14 to 2014-15.

**Recommendations**

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

- Document and track implementation of program components within the ACE campuses as well as work with ACE staff to clarify and set parameters for collaboration between the Imagine 2020 initiative and the ACE initiative.
- Consider reinstating the centralized management of urban specialists (i.e., urban specialists reporting to the Director of Student Discipline) or work with principals and executive directors to ensure they understand and follow the intended purpose of the urban specialist position.
- Review SAM team activities to determine what additional effort is needed to increase the effectiveness of these teams.
- Document which students are participating in optional and required programs and consider measuring dosage (i.e., the amount of time each student spends in the 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, EA145-530-2, which can be found at [http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888](http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888).