



Bilingual Education Program Evaluation Summary, 2014—2015 Executive Summary

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) implemented several bilingual (BE) and English as a second language (ESL) programs during the 2014—2015 school year to serve 25,342 English language learners (ELLs) by the end of the school year. Although AISD's ELL population has decreased slightly over the past 6 years, ELLs represent about 28% of AISD's total student population (84,564 as of October 2014), and the largest percentage of ELLs were enrolled at elementary schools (75%).

During 2014—2015, ELLs were served in one of the following BE or ESL programs: one-way dual language (DL) (48%), ESL pullout (22%), ESL content (13%), transitional late-exit (9%), and two-way DL (6%). Approximately \$12.1 million dollars were spent in AISD to support ELLs during 2014—2015, resulting in an estimated cost of \$497 per ELL served.

During the 2014—2015 school year, according to AISD human resource records, AISD employed 2,346 teachers with a BE or ESL certification and classroom assignment. They had an average of 11 years of professional work experience, and had worked in AISD for an average of 9 years. However, 8% were brand new to teaching. During 2014—2015, more than 40 professional development courses, covering a wide range of topics were offered by the Department of English Language Learners (DELL) to AISD staff. More than 3,000 staff attended.

On the state's required annual English language acquisition assessment for ELLs, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS), AISD ELLs' performance was consistent with gradual language acquisition for students progressing through grade levels. The highest percentages of elementary school ELLs were at beginning or intermediate TELPAS levels, and the highest percentages of middle and high school students were at advanced or advanced high levels. Greater percentages of 5th-grade ELLs in DL than of 5th-grade ELLs in other programs attained advanced or advanced high TELPAS 2015 composite ratings. Yet, AISD was not successful in reaching state accountability targets to minimize the percentages of ELLs performing at beginning TELPAS levels, and the percentages of ELLs who had been in U.S. schools for multiple years making progress on TELPAS over 2 consecutive years.

Examining early reading performance on the English Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI), ELLs' performance at kindergarten through grade 2 varied by BE/ESL program in Spring 2015. Among kindergarten ELLs taking TPRI, those in late-exit and ESL programs outperformed those in DL. Yet, the DL model does not recommend testing ELLs in English at these early grades. ELLs' performance on the Spanish Tejas Lee showed that ELLs in DL programs outperformed ELLs in other programs at each grade level.

ELL's performance on the 2015 State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) at grades 3 through 8 showed the following trends: AISD ELLs outperformed Texas ELLs in reading at grades 3 through 5, in writing at grades 4 and 7, in mathematics (math) at grades 5 and 8, and in science at grades 5 and 8. AISD ELLs tended to have higher passing rates at elementary grades than at middle school grades. In addition, at

elementary grades, ELLs performed better on the English STAAR than on the Spanish STAAR. ELLs' STAAR performance sometimes varied depending on the BE/ESL program at elementary grade levels. For example, ELLs in the transitional late-exit program outperformed ELLs in other programs on English STAAR reading at 3rd grade (80%) and 4th grade (68%). On Spanish STAAR reading, 3rd grade ELLs in DL (65%) outperformed other ELLs. At 5th grade, ELLs in one-way DL (85%) outperformed ELLs in other programs on English STAAR reading; ELLs in both one-way (88%) and two-way (92%) DL outperformed other ELLs on Spanish reading; ELLs in one-way DL (76%) outperformed other ELLs on STAAR math; and ELLs in one-way DL (61%) outperformed other ELLs on STAAR science.

Some of ELLs' lowest STAAR passing rates were at middle school grade levels; specifically, 7th grade reading (20%), math (29%), and writing (19%), as well as 8th grade science (34%) and social studies (20%). ELLs' performance on 2015 end-of-course (EOC) tests at high school grade levels also tended to be very low in English I (18%) and English II (22%), varying by grade level.

AISD ELLs have shown improvement over the past few years with respect to lowered dropout rates (1.8% in 2013—2014) and increased participation rates in career and technology education (CTE) courses (45% in 2014—2015). Although ELL graduation rates decreased (to 50%) in 2013—2014, the ELL graduation rate for 2014—2015 is expected to improve when results are published by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) later this year.

AISD's recent state accountability and performance-based monitoring system (PBMAS) reports outlined several areas of need among ELLs: STAAR performance in reading, writing, math and science; ELL graduation rate; and TELPAS performance (high percentages of ELLs at beginner proficiency levels). Due to these and other factors, AISD staff will be making improvements in program implementation at all school levels, extended professional development opportunities for campus staff, and close monitoring of students' performance and progress throughout the upcoming school year. The following are examples.

- AISD staff are developing a DL classroom observation rubric that will allow teachers to be observed and rated on their level of implementation of specific classroom environment and instruction components. This information can be used by staff at campus and district levels to help improve the fidelity with which critical elements of the DL model are being implemented. Results may be used to help inform future DL professional development and coaching activities. Once refined, the rubric's results also could be used to examine which DL model components may be related to positive student academic outcomes. This information, taken into consideration with other data (e.g., teachers' survey responses indicating that some are having difficulty implementing DL in the classroom) will help guide district staff to provide better support to campus administrators and teachers. District and campus staff will continue efforts to identify elementary campuses that have sufficient numbers of ELLs and campus capacity to offer comprehensive DL programs.
- At the secondary school level, the district extended DL to selected 6th grade students at three middle schools in 2015—2016, thus continuing a path for bilingualism at the middle school level. These efforts will need to be examined closely to understand the best practices used to implement the DL program successfully at upper grade levels.
- Finally, several focused professional development initiatives will continue at several middle and high schools, emphasizing explicit models of support to improve the way teachers provide instruction for ELLs (Guided Linguistic Acquisition Development; sheltered instruction coaching).

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