

Bilingual Education/ESL Programs Evaluation Report, 1998-99
Executive Summary
Author: Rosa María González

In compliance with Texas Education Code §29.062 and §42.153 and Chapter 89.1265 of the Texas Administrative Code, Austin Independent School District (AISD) provides two programs to serve students identified as limited English proficient (LEP): Bilingual Education (BE), which provides dual-language (English and native language) instruction in the major content areas, and English as a Second Language (ESL), which provides intensive English instruction. ESL is both a component of BE and a stand-alone program. The campus Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) makes instructional decisions, which determine the program that best addresses the student's language needs. The program in which a student participates depends on the student's home language, grade level, language dominance, and program availability. Services for some language minority students are also provided through the district's special education program. Parental permission is required for participation in either program.

In 1998-99, AISD enrolled 11,811 LEP students: 93% were Spanish speakers, 3% spoke Vietnamese, <1% spoke Chinese, Korean, or Cambodian, and the remaining 3% represented other language groups. Most (91%) AISD were served through the BE or ESL programs. The parents of 1,091 students (9%) refused Bilingual/ESL Program Services.

Major Findings

Former LEP students who have exited the Bilingual/ESL Programs at AISD have been observed on a yearly basis since 1994-95 to determine how they perform academically. *The achievement of the three groups of former LEP students generally surpassed AISD percentages passing the TAAS. With only two exceptions on All Tests Taken, the percentages passing were between 81% and 100%.* The three groups of former LEP students who have been exited from the program have been tracked: Group 3 is the most recent of the groups, followed by Group 2; and the oldest is Group 1. The performance indicators compared were attendance, potential retention and discipline rates, and grade point averages (GPAs).

Results for former LEP students in *Group 3*:

- Former LEP students in Group 3 in elementary and middle/junior high school were recommended for retention in spring 1999-00 at a lower percentage rate than students districtwide. The potential retention rate for former LEP students in high school was higher than district students overall.
- The GPAs of former LEP students were higher than the overall GPAs for all middle/junior high and high school students,
- The attendance rates of former LEP students at the elementary, middle/junior high school, and high school were higher than the respective overall district attendance rates.
- Former LEP students in middle/junior high school and high school had lower discipline rates than students districtwide. For former LEP students in elementary school, the discipline rate was lower in fall 1998 and higher in spring 1999 than for students in the district.

Results for former LEP students in *Group 2*:

- Former exited LEP students in Group 2 in middle/junior high school were recommended

for potential retention at a higher percentage rate than students districtwide. A lower percentage rate of former exited LEP students in high school were recommended in spring 1999 for potential retention the following year than students districtwide.

- The GPAs for middle/junior high school former LEP students in Group 2 were higher for both semesters than students districtwide; exited LEP high school students GPAs were lower than students in the district overall.
- The attendance rates for exited LEP students in Group 2 at middle/junior high and high school were higher than the respective overall attendance rates at those grade levels for both semesters.
- The percentages of former exited LEP students in Group 2 involved in discipline incidents middle/junior high and high school were lower for both semesters.

Results for former LEP students in Group 1:

- Former exited LEP students in Group 1 in middle/junior high and high school were recommended for potential retention the following year at higher percentage rates than students districtwide.
- The overall GPAs for former exited LEP students in middle/junior high school were higher for both semesters than students districtwide. Former LEP students in high school had the same overall GPA as district students in fall 1998 and a lower GPA in spring 1999.
- The attendance rate for former LEP students in Group 1 in middle/junior high school was higher in fall 1998 than students districtwide, and the same as other district students in spring 1999. The attendance rates for former LEP students in high school were higher for both semesters than overall district students.
- Group 1 former LEP students had lower discipline rates than other students in the district for both semesters in middle/junior high and high school.

The achievement of LEP students as measured by standardized tests, including a Spanish language instrument, was generally below state and national norms.

- Spanish-speaking LEP students tested at grades 3, 5, and 8 scored below the national average on all the subtests taken on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS).
- LEP students speaking languages other than Spanish scored at or above the national average in grades 3 and 5 in mathematics on the ITBS.
- With the exception of grade 7, at all other grade levels and on All Tests Taken, AISD LEP students scored lower than LEP students statewide on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) in English. AISD non-LEP students likewise scored below non-LEP students statewide at all grade levels on All Tests Taken.
- In 1998-99, increases in percentages passing English TAAS on All Tests Taken, Reading and Mathematics by LEP students occurred in 18 of 21 comparisons. The greatest increases in percentages passing occurred in grades 3 and 7 on All Tests Taken, grade 7 in Reading, and grade 6 in Mathematics.
- With few exceptions, the percentages of LEP students passing the TAAS at all grade levels have increased from 1996-97 to 1998-99.
- On the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills in Spanish, AISD LEP students scored lower than LEP students statewide in both reading and mathematics.
- On the La Prueba de Realización, LEP students in grade 5 scored above the national average in reading, and students in grade 7 scored above the national average in reading, mathematics, and composite scores; however, LEP students generally scored below the Spanish-speaking comparison group in reading, mathematics, and composite

scores.

The collaboration of the bilingual education director and coordinators resulted in a total of 47 professional staff development workshops.

- The training sessions were attended by 1,274 participants. Among them were assistant principals, helping teachers, curriculum specialists, coordinators, and data entry clerks.
- The majority of the responses on the workshop evaluation forms were in the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories, indicating positive responses to the workshops.

A comparison of the performance indicators for LEP students served and LEP students whose parents refused program services ("refusals") indicated that:

- The potential retention rate was the same for elementary LEP served and LEP refusals, was lower for LEP served than refusals in middle/junior high school, and the rate was higher for LEP served than for LEP refusals in high school.
- LEP students served maintained a higher grade point average in middle/junior high and high school.
- LEP served had lower attendance rates in elementary grades and higher attendance rates in middle/junior high and high school than LEP refusals for both semesters.
- LEP students served had lower discipline rates for both semesters than LEP refusals in elementary and middle/junior high school. LEP served students in high school were lower in fall 1998 and higher in spring 1999 than students whose parents refused program services.

With the exception of 1997-98, the number and percent of language minority students (served plus refusals) has increased during the past ten years. In 1998-99, limited English proficient students comprised 15.4% of the district's students.

Recommendations

1. The population of LEP students declined slightly in 1997-98 and increased during the 1998-99 school year. The changes in the demographics of the district may have implications for professional staffing at specific campuses.
2. The generally low performance of LEP students on standardized achievement tests, including a Spanish language instrument, reinforces the continuing need to allocate resources to improve the academic achievement of LEP students.
3. The number and percentage passing TAAS of LEP students continues to increase at most grade levels. Concerted efforts to impact instruction at the middle/junior high and high school levels could result in higher percentages of LEP students passing TAAS.
4. More bilingual and school staff participated in professional staff development in 1998-99 than in the previous school year. The duration of most of the workshops was between an

hour and a-half to three hours. Consideration to the length of training time of workshops may better accommodate teacher's schedules, and result in an increase in staff participation.

Mandate

TEC Chapter 89.12651