

Title I Evaluation Report, 1999-2000
Austin Independent School District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title I is a compensatory education program supported by funds from the U.S. Department of Education. The purpose of Title I is to enable schools to provide opportunities for children served to acquire the knowledge and skills described in the state content standards and to meet the state performance standards developed for all children. In 1999-2000, Title I provided funding to 50 Austin Independent School District (AISD) campuses (44 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 1 high school) with 60% or more students from low-income families. The 1999-2000 budget allocation for AISD under Title I, Part A funding was \$13,049,773 (\$11,376,525 entitlement and \$1,673,248 roll-forward from the prior year). A total of 32,497 students were served with Title I, Part A funds through schoolwide programs, private schools, and neglected institutions.

Schoolwide Programs

All students at a Title I designated schoolwide campus are served by Title I. According to the U.S. Department of Education, a school can be designated a Title I schoolwide program if 50% of the children in the school's attendance zone are low-income students.

In the 1999-2000 school year, 31,943 students (25,920 elementary; 4,657 middle school; and 1,366 high school students) were enrolled in AISD schoolwide programs and benefited from Title I funding. Overall, 79% of all Title I students were classified as low income. The ethnic distribution of all Title I students was 64% Hispanic, 25% African American, 10% Anglo/Other, and 2% Asian.

Improved student achievement is the major goal of Title I. The state accountability system criteria are used to assess student performance at the Title I campuses. Some of the findings associated with student achievement at Title I schools include the following:

- ≠ Overall, the percent of Title I students passing TAAS reading, mathematics, and writing increased from 1999 to 2000. The largest increases in percentage of students passing TAAS were in writing at Title I elementary schools and in mathematics at Title I middle schools.
- ≠ There is a large achievement gap between Title I and non-Title I schools in all subject areas for students in AISD elementary and middle schools. There is a 13 to 18 percentage point difference between Title I and non-Title I TAAS passing rates when looking at all students passing TAAS reading, mathematics, and writing.
- ≠ When the TAAS passing rates for disaggregated groups are examined, it can be seen that the passing rates for African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students in Title I schools are closer to the passing rates for non-Title I students in these groups.
- ≠ This is the second year of changes to the accountability system, which recently began to include TAAS results for students in special education and Spanish-speaking students. After a decline in TAAS passing rates in 1999, the percentages of Title I students passing TAAS reading, mathematics, and writing have increased in 2000 to the same level as, or higher than, the 1998 passing rating, except TAAS reading for White students.
- ≠ When looking at achievement by grade, there is a lower percentage of Title I students passing TAAS reading (59.6%) and mathematics (63.3%) in grade 6 at *middle school* than any other grade. However, Title I grade 6 students at the *elementary* level had the highest percent passing TAAS reading (78.3%) and mathematics (80%) for all comparisons of Title I students by grade. This trend mirrors the district achievement by grade.
- ≠ Further analysis by grade and ethnicity indicates that the percentage of students passing TAAS are lower for African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged groups at grade 6 and 7 at Title I middle schools than for those groups at non-Title I schools.
- ≠ The achievement gap between Title I and non-Title I students seems to be closing by grade 8 in reading and mathematics. However, the percentage of grade 8 students at Title I schools passing TAAS writing was lower than for grade 8 students at non-Title I school by 18.9 percentage points in 2000.
- ≠ Four of the nine schools designated *Low Performing* in 2000 are Title I schools. Three of the schools were rated *Low Performing* for academics and one school for dropout and attendance.

- ≠ Three Title I elementary schools (Dawson, Maplewood, and Ridgetop) were designated *Recognized* by TEA for 2000 (80% of all students and in each disaggregated group passed in each subject area).
- ≠ TEA gave additional acknowledgment for growth in scores among peer schools in reading to Dawson and Graham elementary schools.
- ≠ None of the schools that were *Low Performing* based on percent passing TAAS in 1999 remained *Low Performing* in 2000. In fact, Blackshear, Govalle, and Wooldridge, 1999 *Low Performing* schools, made impressive gains in percentages passing TAAS in 2000.

The district challenge is to improve TAAS passing rates at all AISD campuses, particularly the Title I campuses. Four of the nine low performing schools for 2000 are Title I schools. Dropout and attendance rates are of concern for secondary AISD schools as well. Only three of the schools designated *Low Performing* were for academic performance, but, as the bar is raised and 55% of students must pass TAAS for a campus to be designated *Acceptable* in 2002, schools below the 60% level this year will need to continue to monitor achievement closely.

The following recommendations for improved student achievement are offered:

- ≠ The district will need to increase efforts to monitor achievement and find ways to assist campus staff with the challenge of raising academic achievement of all students, as well as focusing on attendance and dropout prevention.
- ≠ Mandatory districtwide training for teachers in literacy, mathematics, and writing should continue in order to improve student achievement.
- ≠ Intensive structured summer programs with strong academic focus will be needed to close the gap between Title I and non-Title I schools. The district should discourage Title I schools from having loosely structured summer programs simply because there is Title I money available. If Title I funds are used for summer programs, the programs should be assessed with a pre- and posttest instrument to measure gains.
- ≠ Title I schools should utilize reading intervention for students in grades 1-3 offered in the districtwide summer program, *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading*, and use Title I funds for students in other grades for reading or for students in any grade for mathematics.
- ≠ The percentage of African American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students passing TAAS reading and mathematics at grade 6 and grade 7 at Title I and non-Title I schools is an issue of concern. Intervention programs are needed to target those students in need of academic tutoring.

Prekindergarten

The AISD prekindergarten program is an important contributor to reaching the state and district goal of having every student reading on grade level by the end of third grade. In 1999-2000, 57 of the 71 AISD elementary schools provided prekindergarten (pre-K) education. AISD has both half-day and full-day pre-K programs. The AISD prekindergarten program served 3,571 four-year-olds during 1999-2000. In the past, the extra half day of instruction in full-day programs was funded by Title I. In 1999-2000, AISD received a \$4.6 million *Prekindergarten Expansion Grant* from the state that was used to reimburse schools that were using Title I funds to pay for the extra half day of instruction in their full-day pre-K programs. For the complete report, see OPE Publication 99.11, *Full-Day Prekindergarten Evaluation, 1999-2000*.

S.O.A.R.

The *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading* (S.O.A.R.) program is AISD's elementary summer school program designed to improve reading and literacy. In June 2000, the 21-day program served 2,406 grade 1-3 students who were below grade level in reading and/or at risk of retention. The budget allocation of over \$2 million was funded through federal Title I (29%), a state *Student Success Initiative* grant (33%), and local dropout prevention (38%) monies. Reading instruction was provided by 176 AISD teachers who attended professional development in the elements of balanced literacy as part of the S.O.A.R. summer program.

The average gain for all students who attended the program five days or more was 2.1 reading levels as determined by the *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA). This gain is equivalent to about one fourth to one half of an academic year's progress, depending on the grade level of the student. During the four-week program, 92% of all students with valid pre- and posttest scores (n=2,118) showed reading improvement by advancing one or more levels on the DRA.

The S.O.A.R. program has grown each of its three years and has shown consistent reading gains for students. In addition, a total of more than 300 AISD teachers have received valuable, hands-on training in balanced literacy. For a complete copy of the report, see the Office of Program Evaluation Publication 99.07, *Summer Opportunity to Accelerate Reading (S.O.A.R.) Evaluation, 2000*.

Year-Round Schools

In 1999-2000, the year-round school calendar was used in 11 Title I campuses. In this program, the school year revolves around an approximate 60/20 schedule (60 days in school and 20 days out) in contrast to the traditional nine-month calendar. The breaks between the 60-day sessions are called intersessions. Students falling behind in achievement are provided supplementary instruction during these intersessions. A total of 5,929 students was enrolled at the year-round campuses in 1999-2000. One of the year-round schools, Maplewood, was designated *Recognized* by TEA for 1999-2000 based on 80% of all students and 80% of students in each disaggregated group passing each of the TAAS tests. Some findings related to year-round schools include the following:

- ⚡ Overall, in terms of TAAS passing rates, students in year-round schools outperformed students in regular-calendar Title I schools, but did not do as well as students in regular-calendar non-Title I schools, in all three subject areas tested.
- ⚡ African American and economically disadvantaged students at year-round schools outperformed similar students at regular-calendar Title I and regular-calendar non-Title I schools in all comparisons reported. Also, Hispanic students at year-round schools achieved a higher percentage passing TAAS reading and writing than did similar students at regular-calendar Title I and regular-calendar non-Title I schools.
- ⚡ After a decline in TAAS percent passing in 1999, the percentage of students passing TAAS at year-round schools was up in each subject area in 2000. These increases put the 2000 TAAS percent passing rates higher than any to date for year-round schools.

In 2000-01, there will be only eight year-round schools. Three schools, Barrington, Winn, and Wooldridge, have decided to change to the traditional schedule this year. It is expected that the district will no longer use the year-round calendar in 2002-03.

With these changes ahead for year-round schools, the following recommendations are offered:

- ⚡ Achievement should be monitored at schools that have changed from the year-round calendar to a traditional school calendar to ensure that the African American, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged students who seemed to benefit most from the year-round calendar continue to perform comparably well on the TAAS tests in 2001.
- ⚡ Achievement of 2001 year-round and former year-round schools should be compared next year to investigate whether the gains made by students at the year-round schools in the past were a result of the calendar or of other school interventions for academically needy students.

Title I Summer Programs

Twenty-three Title I elementary campuses provided summer programs using their regular Title I budget, Title I roll-forward funds, or grant funds. The campuses provided enrichment and remedial services to a total of 1,310 students. Instruction for the at-risk population focused on language arts and mathematics TAAS objectives. Grade levels served were early childhood through sixth grade and included students in special education. The structure of the summer programs was decided by the staff at each school. Assessment data were not compiled for these summer programs.

Five Title I middle schools (Dobie, Fulmore, Mendez, Pearce and Webb) each received special allocations (roll-forward funds) of \$200,000 for summer 2000. This action created tuition-free middle school summer programs at these campuses. In addition to classroom teachers, these Title I funds supported a site manager/principal, materials and computer labs. Language arts and mathematics TAAS objectives were the focus of the instruction for the at-risk population.

The following recommendations for use of Title I funds for summer programs are offered:

- ⚡ Schools should encourage students who can benefit from districtwide programs that target specific grades and subjects (e.g., S.O.A.R.) to attend. Other summer programs using Title I funds should focus on improving achievement of students in other subjects and/or other grade levels than those offered by the district.
- ⚡ The purpose of summer programs for Title I students is to improve academic achievement. Accountability is needed for all summer school programs funded by Title I. Program designs should include pre- and posttest assessment as well as other performance measures to determine program effectiveness.

Parent and Community Involvement

Title I schools are required to build partnerships that benefit not only students and parents, but schools and communities as well. In 1999-2000, 45 Title I campuses had parent education staff to assist with parent and community involvement. The parent education staff at these schools performed the following services at Title I schools:

- ⚡ Parent participation was encouraged by offering workshops, seminars, and activities designed to enhance parenting skills and to encourage participation of parents in the education of children.
- ⚡ The parent education staff was successful in encouraging the support of the community. For example, Title I schools with parent education staff received \$848,807 in in-kind contributions and \$110,600 in cash contributions from local *Austin Partners in Education* stakeholders. Title I schools also received 101,811 hours of volunteer service during the 1999-2000 school year.

Recommendations for the parental involvement component of Title I include the following:

- ⚡ Parent education staff should take full advantage of services offered by School Support Services, such as staff development and districtwide Parent Advisory Council meetings. It is recommended that a goal for next year's program is to increase parent educators' participation in these activities, supported by strong administrative (area superintendents) advocacy.
- ⚡ The parent education staff should take an active role in disseminating information on successful parental involvement activities at Title I campuses in the district. Principals and central administration staff should take responsibility for ensuring that campuses throughout the district are aware of successful practices currently in place.

Title I Migrant

Six secondary AISD schools with identified at-risk migrant students were given funds to provide supplementary instructional materials/services during the school year. In 1999-2000, Johnston High School and Burnet, Mendez, Pearce, and Webb middle schools received funds for supplementary tutorial services, and Lanier High School received funds for summer school tutors.

During the regular school year, twenty-nine migrant students were provided tutorial service. A total of 47 migrant students participated in summer school activities. Migrant funds were used to pay tuition for 15 secondary students to attend summer school classes. In addition, seventeen students attended the S.O.A.R. summer program, and 15 pre-K and kindergarten students attended the LEP (limited English proficiency) summer activities.

Recommendations for Migrant Program services include the following:

- ⚡ Migrant support services should survey migrant parents in the fall of the new school year to determine their training needs.
- ⚡ The residency status of school age children should be determined at the time they are recruited.

Budget

The mandate for Title I funds is Public Law 103-382. The 1999-2000 AISD Title I budget consisted of the following allocations:

Title I, Part A	\$13,049,773 (\$11,376,525 entitlement & \$1,673,248 roll forward)
Title I, Part C (<i>Migrant</i>)	\$165,602
Title I, Part D, Subpart 2 (<i>Delinquent</i>)	\$66,487

Austin Independent School District

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