

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011–2012, Austin Independent School District (AISD) provided students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) with either a bilingual education (BE) or English as a second language (ESL) program to promote educational equity among all students. AISD's BE/ESL programs were provided funding through local; state; federal (i.e., Title I and Title III); and private sources.



**Program overview.** In Fall 2011, 24,000 students in AISD were identified as LEP, representing 28% of the total AISD enrollment. According to AISD's student records, demographic and enrollment information included the following:

- Ninety-three percent of English language learners (ELLs) were also economically disadvantaged (i.e., qualified for free or reduced-price lunch).
- Ninety-two percent of ELLs were of Hispanic origin, followed by Asian (5%), White (2%), and African American (< 1%).
- Nine percent of ELLs ( $n = 2,120$ ) were immigrants (i.e., born outside the United States to non-naturalized or non-U.S. citizens).
- Nine percent of ELLs ( $n = 2,103$ ) were identified as requiring special educational services.
- Three percent of ELLs ( $n = 695$ ) did not participate in either a BE or ESL program due to parental denial of service.
- At least 71 languages other than English and Spanish were represented among AISD ELLs' primary home languages.
- Seventy-eight percent of ELLs were served at the elementary grade level (i.e., early education through 5th grade); 13% of ELLs were served at the middle school level (i.e., 6th through 8th grade); and 10% of ELLs were served at the high school level (i.e., 9th through 12th grade).

**Dual language (DL) implementation.** In 2011–2012, the Gómez and Gómez DL enrichment model was implemented at 66 schools for prekindergarten through 1st grade and 2nd grade at 9 pilot schools. In addition to the Spanish program, Summit Elementary School (ES) provided a DL program in Vietnamese. Eighty-three percent ( $n = 55$ ) of implementing schools were provided a fidelity rating of average or higher by the Dual Language Training Institute (DLTI) staff. On average, pilot campuses improved their DLTI ratings. Campuses that provided a two-way program also received higher ratings, on average than campuses with only one-way programs.

According to a district survey administered to DL teachers and principals, 46% of staff were satisfied with the way the current DL program was operating in the district. Teachers who provided DL instruction

in a classroom environment that served both ELLs in the one-way DL program and non-ELLs receiving regular instruction reported the least satisfaction with the program.

However, the vast majority (79%) of DL staff were supportive of the DL program and considered it effective in helping students learn languages, academic knowledge, and skills. Staff's satisfaction may improve if the district can provide additional campus support in terms of adequate staffing; increased DL curriculum resources, materials, and professional development opportunities; and district-provided strategies that address specific campus needs.

Department of Research and Evaluation (DRE) staff also found DLTI fidelity ratings differed across newly implemented DL campuses for *emerging proficient* (i.e., average) and *proficient* schools in terms of the following items, according to staffs' perceptions:

- Principal promotes additive bilingualism
- Principal is advocate for the program
- School environment promotes bilingualism
- Day-to-day decisions are aligned to DL
- Program design is aligned to the program vision, philosophy, and goals

Campuses rated *emerging proficient* or higher and those rated *below expectations* or lower differed with respect to the following items, according to staffs' perceptions:

- Principal promotes cultural equity
- Principal promotes additive bilingualism
- Leaders are advocates for ELLs
- Program design is aligned to the program vision, philosophy, and goals
- Parents are advocates for the DL program

**Student English language proficiency.** ELLs' English language proficiency is assessed annually for kindergarten through 12th grade by the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). The Texas Education Agency (TEA) calculated a yearly progress indicator based on change in students' TELPAS composite ratings from Spring 2011 to Spring 2012. To meet the state's annual measurable achievement objective (AMAO) standard 1 (i.e., progress), at least 49% of district ELLs in kindergarten through 12th grade must have earned a yearly progress indicator of 1 or higher (i.e., students must have progressed by at least one proficiency level or maintained a rating of *advanced high* from year to year). Sixty-two percent of AISD kindergarten through 12th-grade ELLs gained at least one proficiency level or remained at *advanced high* proficiency from 2010–2011 to 2011–2012.

On average, DL students (both ELL and non-ELL) showed growth in English language proficiency on the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) Links and preLAS for kindergarten and grade 2. For kindergarten students, native language (L1) proficiency was a predictor of progress in second language acquisition. Non-ELLs did not progress as much in Spanish as ELLs did in English.

**Student academic achievement.** In Spring 2012, the state mandated Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tests were replaced by the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) for grade 3 through 9 in mathematics (math), reading, science, writing, and social studies. TAKS was provided to students in grades 10 and 11. Although the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs

remained in 2011–2012 results, ELLs showed improvement in passing the TAKS standard for most grade levels and content areas. Performance declined for 11th-grade ELLs in the areas of reading, math, and social studies.

Under the STAAR Level II (i.e., satisfactory) standard, the widest achievement gaps between 9th-grade ELLs and non-ELLs were in the areas of reading and writing, unlike in previous years, when the largest gap was in science. However, the largest achievement gap in reading between ELLs and non-ELLs using the TAKS standard was in grade 8, which implies that when the Level II standard is applied, grade 8 reading might be an area of greater concern than grade 9 reading. When the STAAR Level II standard was compared with the TELPAS ratings for reading and writing, the data suggested it was more difficult for AISD ELLs to achieve the end-of-course Level II standard than to receive a TELPAS advanced high rating.

**BE/ESL program exit.** The number of students exiting the BE/ESL programs decreased by 17% from 2010–2011 to 2011–2012. The decline was most likely related to the change in exit criteria due to the transition to STAAR. Further investigation is suggested to understand how the STAAR Level II standard will affect ELLs' exits rates in years to come because the new standard may have implications for staffing.

**BE/ESL teaching staff.** In 2011–2012, 2,153 teachers with BE or ESL certification worked with ELLs. Of the 2,135 BE/ESL certified teachers who worked full time, 97% were in elementary schools ( $n = 2,081$ ), and the remaining were in middle school ( $n = 32$ ) and high school ( $n = 22$ ). A greater percentage of secondary ESL-certified teachers (78%) than of elementary BE/ESL certified teachers (45%) attended district BE/ESL professional development opportunities. However, of those BE/ESL-certified teachers who attended professional development activities, elementary teachers, on average, earned more credit hours than did secondary teachers.

**Fiscal consideration.** The cost of the 2011–2012 BE/ESL programs was approximately \$5.9 million, which was provided through local (38%), state (6%), federal (40%), and private (17%) funds. ELL summer school programs represented 23% of the expenditures. The cost-per-student served (excluding summer school) was \$193 (as of August 23, 2012).

**Conclusion.** Although the achievement gap persisted in 2011–2012 in terms of TAKS passing rates, the district generally showed overall improvement for ELLs in most content areas for most grades. The district should focus on the areas of ELLs' reading and writing at the secondary level, especially at the 8th and 9th grades. Efforts directed toward ELL reading may improve ELLs' performance in science at the secondary level and may help improve ELLs' progress in obtaining high school graduation in 4 years because research has shown that 9th-grade English is a core course a high percentage of ELLs fail (Brunner, 2011c).

Patterns in the 2011–2012 attendance rates and TELPAS scores for ELLs were mostly consistent with patterns from previous years (Brunner, 2011a), although attendance rates as a whole did increase. ELLs' exit rates declined, and administrators should consider how the STAAR Level II standard will affect ELLs' exit rates, especially at the 4th- and 7th-grade levels.

The AISD BE/ESL programs are essential to ELLs' growth, not only for English language proficiency, but also for success in core content areas. Based on the present summary report, DRE recommends the following:

- To advance the district's goal of eliminating the achievement gap, further work should be done to determine factors that explain why some ELLs exit the program within 5 to 7 years and others do not.
- Given the goal of college and career readiness, further research should consider the impact of STAAR Level II standards on ELLs' graduation rates, and specifically how ELLs' standardized test performance may affect their dropout rate.
- The district should continue to evaluate ELLs' language and academic performance in the DL program.
- Administrators should develop a district standard for minimum requirements for DL (e.g., staffing and ELL enrollment for one-way and two-way DL classrooms) to limit the variation in implementation (i.e., mixed/combined classrooms) across the district.
- District administrators should develop a process to solicit feedback from DL campus staff (both teachers and principals) about their campuses' DL needs and provide adequate responses to meet those needs.
- To continue improving the level of DL implementation, administrators also may consider using exemplary DL teachers as mentors and using sites with high average implementation ratings for possible classroom visits.

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