

# Diversified Education Through Leadership, Technology, and Academics Credit Recovery Program Annual Report

2020–2021

## Introduction

Diversified Education Through Leadership, Technology, and Academics (DELTA) is a dropout prevention and course credit recovery program that has been implemented in Austin Independent School District (AISD) high schools since 1995. It is an open-entry, open-exit program that provides individualized, self-paced instruction through a computer-based platform to deliver curricula aligned with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The program targets students who have already dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of high school. Through computer-based coursework, supplemented by a variety of assignments and projects, and under the guidance of a DELTA teacher, students can complete high school courses and earn credits, thereby allowing a route to graduation that fits the scheduling requirements of those who might otherwise drop out of school. The program also provides students with the option of accelerating course completion and earning multiple credits in a short amount of time.

This report includes findings regarding the demographic characteristics and academic outcomes of the students served; highlights emerging topics from the student, teacher, and program staff surveys; and provides general recommendations for future program implementation.

It is important to note that changes to learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected implementation of educational programs across the district. This may have also affected survey distribution and data collection. Additionally, it is possible that these changes affected students' outcomes and general perceptions of the program.

## DELTA Participants

A total of 1,617 students from 15 high school campuses, corresponding to 8% of AISD's high school body ( $N = 20,813$ ), participated in DELTA in 2020–2021. The high schools included were Alternative Learning Center (ALC), Akins, Anderson, Austin, Bowie, Crockett, Eastside, Garza, Leadership Academy, Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ), McCallum, Navarro, Northeast, Phoenix Academy, and Travis. The majority of these students were Hispanic (69%), economically disadvantaged (63%), and/or categorized as being at risk of dropping out of school (79%) (Table 1). In addition, 26% of the participating students were Emergent Bilingual, and 6% received special education services. AISD as a whole had lower percentages of students who were economically disadvantaged (52%) and who were at risk (45%) in 2020–2021 than did the group of students who enrolled in DELTA, indicating the program targeted the students most in need of support.

Table 1.

**A total of 1,617 high school students participated in the DELTA credit recovery program.**

	Count of students	% of total
Grade 9	54	3%
Grade 10	259	16%
Grade 11	413	26%
Grade 12	891	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,617</b>	
Hispanic	1,113	69%
African American/Black	181	11%
Asian	24	1%
White	256	16%
Two or more races/other	43	3%
At risk	1,284	79%
Economically disadvantaged	1,025	63%
Emergent Bilingual	413	26%
Special education	90	6%

Source. 2020–2021 DELTA program database and AISD student enrollment records

## Student Outcomes

### Credits Earned

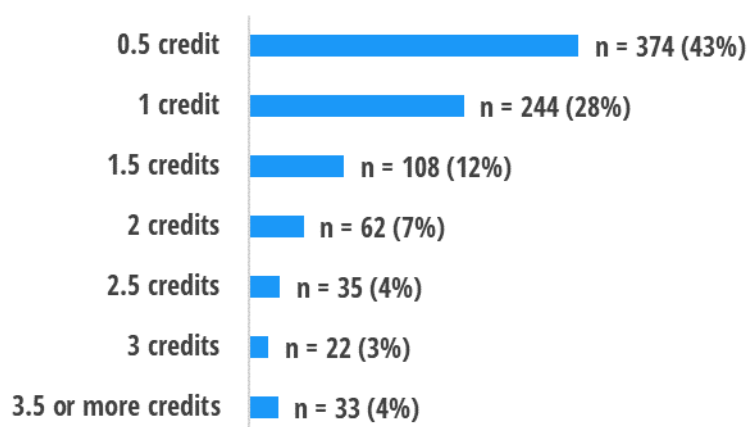
Students can start a DELTA course any time during the school year. Depending on the time of program enrollment, students may or may not complete the course before the end of the semester. In 2020–2021, 1,617 students enrolled in DELTA courses to attempt to recover credits or earn accelerated credits.

Students could enroll in more than one DELTA course during a school year. In 2020–2021, DELTA students enrolled in 2,875 DELTA courses, each corresponding to 0.5 or 1 credit. Overall, students attempted a total of 1,437 credits and earned 64% of those credits (Table 2). The majority of DELTA students (70%) who completed their courses earned 0.5 or 1.0 credit, and 30% of the students earned from 1.5 to 8.0 credits (Figure 1).

Courses taken and credits earned varied across subject areas. The larger group of DELTA courses attempted were in the core subject areas of English language arts (ELA, 29%), math (25%), and social studies (22%). Courses in science and Spanish had the best outcomes, with 77% and 78%, respectively, of credits being completed. Courses in math and ELA had the lowest outcomes, with 55% of students in both cases, completing their courses (Table 2). However, students took longer to complete ELA and math courses than courses in other subjects (Table 3), which may have contributed to the lower completion rate of ELA and math courses. Lastly, on average, students took between 9.3 and 13.7 weeks to complete their courses. Courses in math and ELA took longer to complete than courses in other subject areas (Table 3).

Figure 1.

The majority of DELTA students (70%) completed 0.5 or 1.0 credit.



Source. 2020–2021 DELTA program database

Table 2.

During 2020–2021, DELTA students earned 64% of the credits attempted.

Subject area	Number of courses started	Number of credits started	Number of credits earned	Percentage of credits earned
ELA	825	412.5	225.0	55%
Math	707	353.5	195.5	55%
Music	26	13.0	9.5	73%
Science	597	298.5	229.0	77%
Social studies	630	315.0	232.0	74%
Spanish	90	45.0	35.0	78%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,875</b>	<b>1,437.0</b>	<b>926.0</b>	<b>64%</b>

Source. 2020–2021 DELTA program database

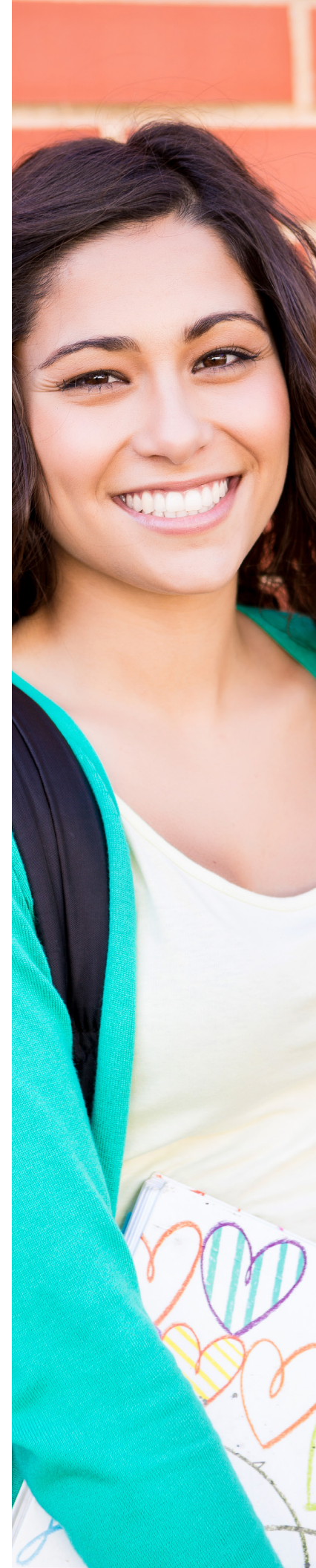
Note. Some courses may have been registered in the database with start dates, without the corresponding students ever starting the courses. Consequently, the number of credits attempted may be lower and the percentage of credits earned may be higher than indicated here.

Table 3.

Students took longer to complete courses in ELA than in other subject areas.

Subject area	Average number of weeks to earn credit	Percentage of DELTA students taking courses in each core area
ELA	13.7	29%
Math	13.5	25%
Science	9.3	21%
Social studies	9.9	22%
Foreign language	13.4	3%
<b>Total DELTA students: 1,617 Average time: 11.6 weeks</b>		

Source. 2020–2021 DELTA program database





## Graduation Outcomes

Preliminary AISD graduation data for 2020–2021 indicated positive outcomes for DELTA participants. Of the 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students enrolled in DELTA courses ( $n = 891$ ), 79% ( $n = 701$ ) graduated. Of the remaining students who did not graduate ( $n = 190$ ), 36% enrolled in other schools or were home schooled, 14% left with a general education diploma (GED; 14%), and 4% returned to their home country; the others had missing or unreportable records. In addition, seven of the students who graduated were originally in the 2020 graduating cohort, further evidence that DELTA helped at-risk students graduate from high school.

## Students' Opinions About the Program

Students completing their credit recovery program courses anytime in 2020–2021 were asked to provide feedback about the program as they exited their course. A total of 153 students completed the survey.

Overall, DELTA students had positive perceptions of the program. The majority of students (83%) indicated the program helped them stay on track to graduate, and 92% said they would tell their friends and classmates to enroll in a credit recovery program if they needed a credit. When DELTA students were asked what the best thing about DELTA was, common topics that emerged were the opportunity to make up credits, the assistance they received from teachers, and the freedom to work at their own pace.

Lastly, a few DELTA students indicated they encountered challenges in their DELTA courses. When these students listed those challenges, their main concerns were personal difficulties in staying motivated, difficulties with the subject matter, and issues navigating the Odysseyware platform.

## Teachers' Opinions About the Program

In Spring 2021, DELTA teachers, counselors, and administrative staff were asked to provide feedback about DELTA in either a verbal or written format. This feedback was collected through interviews, focus groups, and written responses to interview questions. Participants were asked

- what problems they encountered with the program,
- how they were addressing these problems,
- what would help them better address the problems, and
- what benefits they were seeing from DELTA.

Many respondents cited difficulty related to low student motivation and attendance. Campus DELTA staff mentioned the following solutions to address these problems: (a) working with campus staff (e.g., case managers, special education coordinators, counselors) to frequently contact DELTA students and (b) connecting with students individually regarding their progress. In order to better overcome these barriers, respondents mentioned it would be beneficial to have more staff members to contact DELTA students, as well as connecting with other staff on the campus to develop a community.

**"We zoom with the kids, we email the kids, we message them, we encourage them to come to Saturday school, we're always sending out notices. All the staff and I are always very encouraging, very supportive of their efforts. We try to always create an environment that's inclusive, where the students want to come."**  
DELTA staff

**"I'd like to talk to other teachers, because I'll learn from what they did for Delta, Twilight - what was useful, what was not. My key thing would be collaboration and an information retreat where we can share information and see what's working and not working."**  
DELTA staff

Lastly, the majority of DELTA staff who provided feedback indicated that the DELTA program was beneficial by allowing students to graduate on time or in general and providing additional support (e.g., individualized attention) that a student may need.

## Conclusion

Regardless of the possible influence of campus closures on credit earning, DELTA student outcomes were positive. During 2020–2021, 8% of AISD’s high school students enrolled in DELTA courses, and 55% of these students were in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Of the 2,875 credits attempted, 64% were earned. Overall, the majority of credits started were for ELA and math. However, credits taken for science were most likely to be earned (78%). Students were allowed to continue and complete their DELTA coursework in the summer; consequently, the overall percentage of courses successfully completed was higher than the percentage reported here.

In addition, 79% of the 12<sup>th</sup> graders in DELTA graduated from high school. A few of the graduating students were part of prior cohorts, indicating that DELTA helped students stay on track as well as recover credits to graduate. Lastly, students, teachers, and campus administrators had very positive thoughts about DELTA and how this program helped students earn credits and stay on track to graduate.



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