

Reconnection Centers Program 2015-2016

Department of Evaluation and Assessment

*Michael Hinojosa, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools*



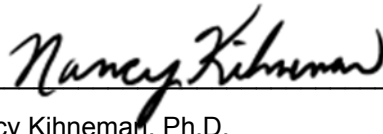
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Reconnection Centers Program

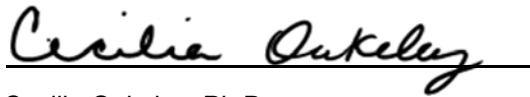
2015-2016

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Nancy Kihneman, Ph.D.
Director, Program Evaluation



Cecilia Oakeley, Ph.D.
Assistant Superintendent

Mike Miles
Superintendent of Schools



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Reconnection Centers Program

2015-2016

Project Evaluator: Dorothea Weir, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the Reconnection Centers program was to provide recovery of credits for students who had failed a course or courses in a core subject area. The program allowed students to remain enrolled in courses in the traditional classroom setting on their campus while recovering credit in Reconnection Centers during assigned periods. Credit recovery allowed students to remain on track to be promoted or graduate with their cohort. In addition, Reconnection Centers provided opportunities for students to receive original credit for selected courses.

- Reconnection Centers were located at 28 high schools in the district, providing online self-paced instruction on 25 to 30 networked computers per Center.
- State Compensatory Education funds in the amount of \$2,888,786 were allocated for the operation of the program.
- Criteria and procedures for student selection were revised in 2015-16 to meet new program requirements. A Path of Documentation, initiated by the school counselor, was used to identify and enroll students who met program criteria, including At-Risk status.
- Facilitator interview results indicated improved communication and support for the program at several campuses. One continuing need was for assistance from content area teachers, particularly in math and science.
- A total of 2,689 students, or 6.8% of the district's enrollment in grades 9-12, were registered for Reconnection Center classes, ranging from 1.3% of students in grade 9 to 15.4% of students in grade 12. Apex Learning data indicated that an additional 807 students were served, for a total of 3,496, with a course completion rate of 67%.
- Approximately half (49.7%) of Reconnection Center students who took *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)* final examinations passed the tests administered. The lowest passing rates by content area were in mathematics and science.
- Approximately 71% of Reconnection Center students in grades 9-11 gained enough credits during the year to be promoted to the next grade level, compared to a goal of 85%.
- By August, 2016, just over 82% of grade 12 Reconnection Center students had accumulated enough credits to graduate, approaching a program goal of 85%.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Purpose and Goals of the Reconnection Centers Program

The Reconnection Centers Program was designed to provide recovery of credits for students who have failed a six-weeks, semester, or full-year course. In addition, Reconnection Centers provided opportunities for students to receive original credit for selected courses. The program allowed students to remain enrolled in courses in the traditional classroom setting on their campus while recovering credit in Reconnection Centers during assigned periods. Credit recovery allowed students to remain on track to be promoted or graduate with their cohort.

Reconnection Centers provided students with online coursework. The Districtwide Student Initiatives Department partnered with Apex Learning to provide each Reconnection Center with digital curriculum, offering Center students self-paced, personalized instruction. The Apex digital curriculum was aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards and, where applicable, designed to prepare students for *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End-of-Course (EOC)* assessments.

Two course options were available: Credit Recovery and Original Credit. In Credit Recovery, students were enrolled in courses they had previously failed, and were given credit once they had completed the required coursework and passed the *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)* exam. High-achieving students could enroll in Original Credit courses to accelerate progress towards graduation.

The Reconnection Centers had a school-within-a-school environment in which the staff consisted of one or two teachers, based on student need. At two-teacher Centers, one teacher served as the facilitator. The facilitator acted as the team leader, and was the liaison between campus administration and the central Reconnection Centers office. This team was responsible for facilitating student learning and mastering of objectives in core subjects using online, self-paced coursework. At some schools with low student demand (e.g., Smith New Tech, Garza, Lassiter), the Center was staffed part-time, and one teacher/facilitator divided his or her time between two to three centers. Each center contained 25 to 30 networked computers. School counselors and Reconnection Centers facilitators worked together to identify students who were good candidates for the program. Once students were identified, they were assigned to the program for one or more class periods, including before- and after-school periods at some campuses. At the time of this report, the district was operating Reconnection Centers at 28 high schools receiving State Compensatory Education funds.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine to what extent the Reconnection Centers program was operating in accordance with its defined goals and expected outcomes as outlined in program

documents, as well as to identify any unintended outcomes of the program. The evaluation included examining data from the 2015-16 school year. The scope of the evaluation included:

1. Identifying the source and amount of funding for the Reconnection Centers program.
2. Reviewing the criteria for selecting students for the Reconnection Centers program.
3. Describing the characteristics of students enrolled in the Reconnection Centers program.
4. Determining achievement and graduation outcomes of students in grades 9-12 who were enrolled in the Reconnection Centers program.

MAJOR EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

What was the source and amount of funding for the Reconnection Centers Program?

Methodology

Funding allocations for the Reconnection Centers program were obtained from the Dallas ISD Budget Services Department.

Results

State Compensatory Education (SCE) funds in the amount of \$2,888,786 were allocated for the operation of the Reconnection Centers program. The largest cost, \$2,480,911, was personnel, including 26 teachers and one instructional specialist. A further \$356,000 was allocated for capital purchases, primarily technology related equipment, and \$51,875 was allocated for supplies and materials.

The purpose of the State Compensatory Education (SCE) program is to supplement the regular education program with compensatory, intensive, and/or accelerated instruction for students identified as being at-risk of dropping out of school (At-Risk). Funds allocated under SCE must be used for programs and services that are supplemental to the regular education program and offer academic support to students who meet At-Risk eligibility criteria established by the state, as defined in Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081 (Appendix A).

House Bill 5, passed in 2013 by the Texas Legislature, added a new section to the education code, requiring school districts to provide accelerated instruction (AI) to each student in any subject in which the student failed to perform satisfactorily on an End-of-Course (EOC) assessment required for graduation. Beginning in 2014-2015, districts were mandated to use appropriated SCE funds for AI. Districts are now required to separately budget compensatory education funds for AI, and are prohibited from use of these funds for any other purpose until the district adopts a budget to support the AI.

What were the criteria for selecting students for the Reconnection Centers program?

Methodology

Criteria for student selection into the Reconnection Centers program were obtained from program documents. Facilitators were interviewed during the spring of 2016 regarding their perceptions of support for the program, resources, student assignment and progress, and recommendations for additional program improvements.

Results

Student Selection Criteria and Processes

Because Reconnection Centers are funded from SCE allocations, it was initially determined that all students assigned to the Centers must be classified as At-Risk according to state criteria. The Path of Documentation was revised to reflect the new requirements, and relevant personnel at each campus received information and training on the updated policies and procedures. Districtwide Student Initiatives provided additional licenses for online coursework, funded from other sources, for a relatively small percentage of students without At-Risk classifications.

Student selection was initiated by the counselor, who examined student records to determine At-Risk status and conducted an individual planning session with each eligible student needing accelerated instruction. In the meeting, the counselor presented academic expectations and a timeline for those expectations to the student. The student was also informed about the grading structure and student responsibilities of the Reconnection Centers, and was required to agree to the expectations and responsibilities in a signed contract.

In order to complete the online work required in the Reconnection Center, the student was required to have passed either the 8th grade STAAR Reading test or the English I *End-of-Course* (EOC) test. If the student had passed neither of those, a Lexile proficiency score of 800-1050 on the *Scholastic Reading Inventory* (SRI) was required. If the Lexile score fell below 800, the counselor met with the student to examine other options for credit recovery, such as summer school, evening school, or in-class instruction during the regular semester.

Once the determination was made that the student was a good candidate for the program, the counselor completed a Reconnection Enrollment Form and provided it to the Reconnection Center facilitator, along with a working document or student transcript, and documentation to support the student's At-Risk status. The Reconnection Enrollment Form included the students' name, identification number, age, parent contact information, the number of credits earned to date, and the student's At-Risk classification(s). The form also included prior state assessment scores and a list of the courses the student needed to take in the Center. The Reconnection facilitator then reviewed and endorsed all enrollment documentation prior to enrolling the student in coursework.

All data, including enrollment date, due dates, and student progress, including scores on assignments and tests, were maintained on the Apex Learning online database. Facilitators were required to track student progress to ensure that students completed a minimum of five activities or assignments during each instructional week. Weekly progress reports were also available to the parent(s), counselor, and administrators. A designated educational team met at intervals to discuss student performance. Once students had completed the necessary coursework with a passing grade, he or she was allowed to take the district's *ACP* exam. The facilitator then entered the final grade into the Apex Learning gradebook, and completed the Reconnection Credit Validation Form (RCVF), which was submitted to the data controller to place credit into the student data system. The Academic Achievement Record (AAR) was then sent by the data controller to the counselor and the facilitator to confirm student status.

Facilitator Interview Responses

A sample of five facilitators participated in in-depth interviews during the spring of 2016. Interviews were held on campus during planning periods or after school, and lasted approximately one hour. Facilitators were asked five open-ended questions, which were provided to them in advance of the interview. The questions focused on issues that were raised in a survey administered to all facilitators in the 2014-15 school year.

Level of campus support and resources. The first question addressed campus support and resources, which had been seen as lacking by many of the respondents to the 2014-15 survey. Four of the five facilitators interviewed felt that the level of campus support was good to excellent. All four specifically mentioned communication with counselors as a positive factor, indicating improvement from the previous year. One facilitator stated "We work closely, very well, making sure students are progressing socially and academically." The fifth facilitator reported a low level of support, primarily because counselors at that school were busy with other duties and had not fully grasped the intent of the program. That facilitator also expressed a need for "updated and operable" computers, in order to meet administrators' expectations of the number of students to be served in the program. All facilitators interviewed saw additional support from content-area teachers as a need, specifically in mathematics (4 facilitators), science (4), Spanish (1), Special Education (1), and all core areas (1).

Needs for instructional support for continued growth. This question was intended to elicit responses about facilitators' needs for professional development and other support based on their classroom observations and evaluations, but four of the five did not identify any needs in this area. The fifth suggested that newer facilitators should have the opportunity to shadow more experienced facilitators, and that professional development sessions should be held at different Centers to see in person how they are run.

Characteristics of students most and least likely to benefit from online coursework in Reconnection Centers. All facilitators interviewed (5) cited self-motivation, maturity, and self-discipline as characteristics most likely to lead to student success in a self-paced program. These were noted as more often found in juniors and seniors than in underclassmen (3); one facilitator stated, "They (juniors and seniors) are stakeholders in their own educational process. They want to graduate on time and see that as attainable."

Another facilitator commented that high-ability, low-achieving students, “bored with repetition in regular classes,” did well in the Centers’ self-directed program. Other factors mentioned affecting student success were support and structure at home (3), reading levels (3), and chronic absenteeism (1). One facilitator felt that the least likely to succeed were students who were “too far behind and felt hopeless,” and another noted difficulties with students whose learning style benefits from direct teaching.

Recommended changes to Centers. Facilitators were asked, “If you could change your Center in one way this year, what would that be? What outcome would that help to achieve?” Two facilitators recommended the addition of a matching teacher in math and science, to serve more students and help them to progress faster in those areas. One commented, “[The students] failed with a teacher in a traditional classroom, and now they are expected to complete the work on their own.” Another suggested that students should be double-blocked for a 90-minute rather than a 45-minute period, and yet another recommended that Centers should be organized by major content area to provide additional subject-specific resources, such as periodic tables in a chemistry area. Finally, one commented, “This has been a phenomenal year – I don’t want any major changes.”

Additional comments on topics not discussed. At the end of the interview, facilitators were invited to comment on any topics they felt had not been covered that they would like to see addressed. One did not, and stated that the interview had provided “good coverage” of issues. Two noted concerns with money: one would like to see more online programs developed, specifically with video content, while being generally pleased with the Apex offerings, and another saw a need for increased funding to support an additional teacher and additional space. Another wanted more specificity about timetables for student completion of coursework, and to know if standards differed by subject and were consistently implemented the same way in all Centers. One facilitator summed up support for the Reconnection Centers, as reaffirmed by several colleagues: “I like this opportunity because it prepares [the students] for what they can encounter in adult life. They may have messed up, been immature, but they make up their minds and get focused” in the program.

Responses will be shared in greater detail with program management to assist with improvements for the 2016-17 school year.

What were the characteristics of students served in the Reconnection Centers program?

Methodology

The district’s course database provided enrollment data for students registered for the Reconnection Centers program at each campus. Enrollment was recorded using course numbers in a sequence from 7100 to 7130, with a separate number for each period from 0 to 10, allowing assignment to before- and after-school periods, either full-year or semester. However, the course database did not contain grades or indicators of which courses were being attempted.

Apex Learning supplied data summarizing student enrollment in online coursework, course progress, and course completions for each campus served. However, a database of students served was not available, so that demographic characteristics and educational outcomes beyond the online coursework itself could not be linked to the information provided.

District course data, therefore, were used as the best indicator of those students referred to Reconnection Centers for the 2015-16 school year. As noted in prior reports, district data are also not completely accurate, as some schools continue to record enrollment only for students who are assigned to the program during a regular class period, so that before- and after-school students are not documented on the Chancery database. However, district records continue to provide the most representative data available of the demographic, attendance, and academic characteristics of students currently referred to the program.

Results

Across grades 9-12, 6.8% of enrolled students (2,689 of 39,539) were assigned to one or more periods of Reconnection Center classes, a decrease from 8.2% reported in 2014-15. Figure 1 shows the percent of students at each grade level who were enrolled in the program during either or both semesters of the 2015-16 school year. The largest percentage of students served was in Grade 12 (N=1,230); just over fifteen percent of district seniors were assigned to the Reconnection program for at least one period.

Figure 1: Percent of Students Enrolled in Reconnection Centers by Grade

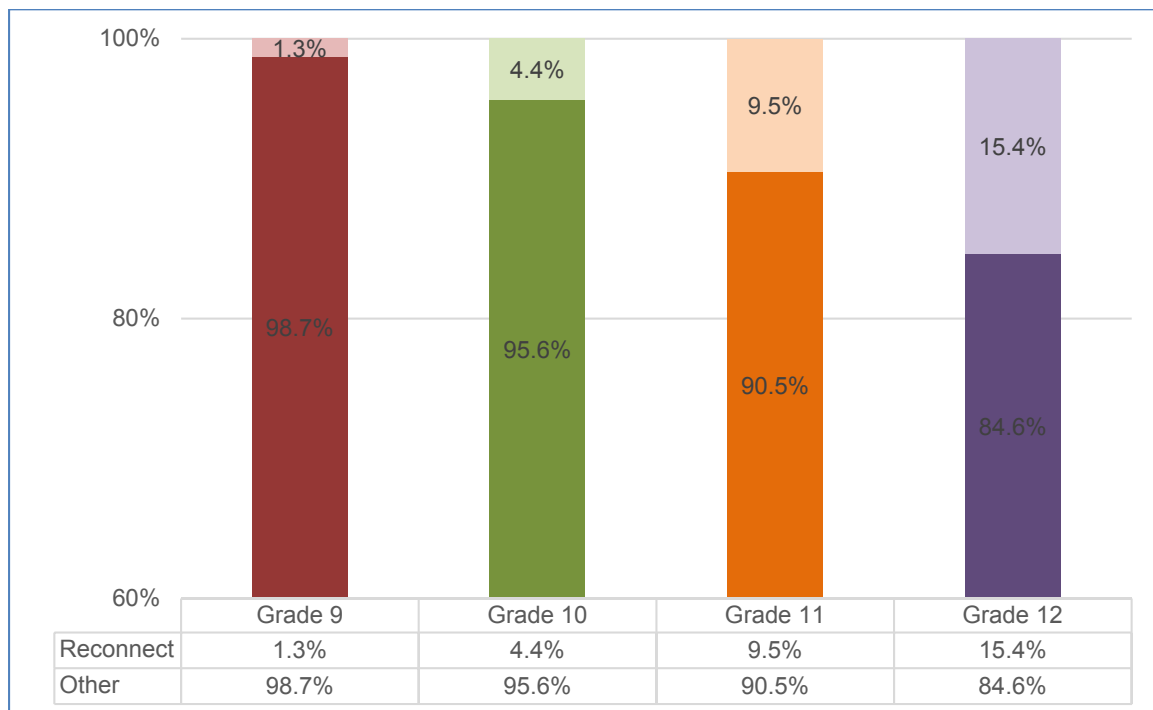


Table 1 displays demographic characteristics for the district population and Reconnection Center students in grades 9-12. A larger percentage of Reconnection students than of all district students were male. Differences in ethnicity, English Proficiency status, and economic status were less than 5 percentage points in all categories. The percentage of At-Risk students was considerably higher, due to program guidelines requiring that all students using online coursework licenses purchased with SCE funds must be classified as At-Risk; these students made up about 81% of Reconnection students, compared to 62% districtwide. Reconnection students who were not At-Risk (19%) were provided licenses purchased with non-SCE funds.

Table 1: 2015-2016 Student Demographic Characteristics

Subgroup	District		Reconnection	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender				
Male	19,558	49.7%	1,509	56.1%
Female	19,801	50.3%	1,180	43.9%
Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	26,597	69.9%	1,872	69.6%
African American	9,119	22.6%	700	26.0%
White	1,998	5.0%	81	3.0%
Other ¹	957	2.4%	36	1.3%
English Proficiency				
Non-LEP	20,183	51.3%	1,445	53.7%
LEP	9,825	25.0%	542	20.2%
Exited LEP	9,351	23.8%	702	26.1%
Economic Disadvantage				
Disadvantaged	32,564	82.7%	2,261	84.1%
Not Disadvantaged	6,367	17.4%	428	15.9%
At-Risk Status				
At-Risk	24,483	62.2%	2,167	80.6%
Not At-Risk	14,876	37.8%	522	19.4%
Total	39,359	100.0%	2,689	100.0%

Table 2 shows the number of students enrolled at each high school campus at the PEIMS snapshot date who were also enrolled in Reconnection Centers during either semester of the 2013-2014, 2014-15, and 2015-16 school years. The totals do not include students who enrolled after the PEIMS snapshot date, due to difficulty in tracking students who moved to a different campus during the year, so are slightly lower than districtwide results reported above. Reconnection enrollment rates varied from 0% to 31% of campus enrollment. Roosevelt had the largest decrease in student enrollment, 22.8 percentage points, followed by Conrad and Madison.

¹ Other includes Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Two or More Races, and Not Available.

Table 2: Student Enrollment in Reconnection Centers, 2013-14 through 2015-16

Campus	N Enrolled			N Reconnection			Percent Reconnection		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
Comprehensive High Schools									
Adams, B.	1,794	1,938	1,965	113	138	96	6.3	7.1	4.9
Adamson	1,424	1,441	1,519	56	47	115	3.9	3.3	7.6
Carter	959	1,040	981	67	48	38	7.0	4.6	3.9
Conrad	1,126	1,126	1,164	106	122	45	9.4	10.8	3.9
Garza EC	415	417	426	3	1	16	0.7	0.2	3.8
Gilliam	362	356	381	1	0	0	0.3	0.0	0.0
Hillcrest	1,164	1,250	1,181	93	110	82	8.0	8.8	6.9
Jefferson	1,485	1,727	1,734	140	134	137	9.4	7.8	7.9
Kimball	1,306	1,459	1,485	121	91	92	9.3	6.2	6.2
Lassiter EC	230	241	245	5	1	0	2.2	0.4	0.0
Lincoln	512	527	547	78	81	75	15.2	15.4	13.7
Madison	451	467	448	27	56	31	6.0	12.0	6.9
Molina	2,008	2,100	2,090	68	129	107	3.4	6.1	5.1
North Dallas	1,224	1,210	1,208	154	175	208	12.6	14.5	17.2
Pinkston	926	1,000	978	106	69	69	11.4	6.9	7.1
Roosevelt	639	600	624	125	229	96	19.6	38.2	15.4
Samuell	1,617	1,641	1,763	133	143	136	8.2	8.7	7.7
Seagoville	1,201	1,288	1,356	51	63	82	4.2	4.9	6.0
Skyline	4,614	4,787	4,725	239	367	254	5.2	7.7	5.4
South Oak Cliff	1,196	1,321	1,305	125	202	148	10.5	15.3	11.3
Spruce	1,329	1,497	1,727	143	131	157	10.8	8.8	9.1
Sunset	2,128	2,078	2,052	213	208	154	10.0	10.0	7.5
White	2,293	2,290	2,294	179	188	164	7.8	8.2	7.1
Wilmer-Hutchins	848	811	789	46	55	33	5.4	6.4	4.2
Wilson	1,619	1,695	1,736	215	186	151	13.3	11.0	8.7
Magnet High Schools									
Obama HS	64	128	433	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rangel HS	254	270	281	4	4	4	1.6	1.5	1.4
Smith New Tech	351	435	433	1	32	22	0.3	7.4	5.1
Townview Business	479	507	521	47	50	58	9.8	9.9	11.1
Townview Education	307	315	325	15	11	15	4.9	3.5	4.6
Townview Health	534	550	552	16	19	6	3.0	3.5	1.1
Townview Law	395	392	386	27	41	27	6.8	10.5	7.0
Townview Sci. & Eng.	385	395	407	18	6	5	4.7	1.5	1.2
Townview TAG	247	252	256	0	0	5	0.0	0.0	2.0
Washington Arts	907	895	903	0	0	1	0.0	0.0	0.1
Alternative High Schools									
Angelou	9	24	27	0	7	5	0.0	29.2	18.5
SCGC	122	102	84	22	18	10	18.0	16.7	11.9
Patton	135	102	135	47	31	42	34.8	30.4	31.1
Total	37,059	35,542	39,359	2,804	3,193	2,689	7.6	8.2	6.8

What were the outcomes of the Reconnection Centers program?

Methodology

Course completion data were provided by Apex Learning from their online database. Data for credit attainment were obtained from district databases for students enrolled in the Reconnection Centers during the 2015-2016 school year. The determination was made for students in grades 9, 10, and 11 that they were not under-credited if they had attained 5, 12, or 18 credits, respectively, by the end of the second semester. For students in grade 12, graduation data were obtained from district records in September, 2016, to include summer graduates. ACP data from a separately maintained Reconnection Center file were examined to determine Reconnection Center students' test scores and passing rates.

Results

Course Completions

Apex Learning data show a total of 3,496 students who accessed online coursework in the Reconnection Centers, attempting completion of 7,346 courses. Approximately 57% of students (N=1,994) were successful in completing at least one course. Districtwide, the completion rate for all online Apex courses attempted was 67%.

Campus completion rates were highest at Townview and Garza Early College (89%), followed by Hillcrest and Lincoln, each with 86%. Excluding Rangel, which served only 5 students, the lowest completion rates was at School Community Guidance Center (17%), a disciplinary alternative campus. The lowest rates at comprehensive and magnet high schools were found at Madison (26%), Gilliam (44%), Roosevelt (45%), and Seagoville (46%).

Apex reported a higher course completion rate for Original Credit students (75.0%) than for those attempting Credit Recovery (67.2%). Of students who completed the assigned coursework, 9.8% received a final course grade of A (90-100), 47.6% a grade of B (80-89), and 42.1% a grade of C. Fewer than 0.5% received a failing grade or no credit for the course.

Table 3: Students Served, Course Enrollment, and Course Completion, 2015-16

Campus	Students Served	Enrollments per Student	Enrollments with Progress	Students Completing	Enrollments Completed	Completions per Student	Completion Rate
Comprehensive High Schools							
Adams, B.	127	2.07	216	57	126	2.21	58%
Adamson	150	2.35	336	100	239	2.39	71%
Carter	59	1.75	84	29	57	1.97	68%
Conrad	99	1.68	141	48	92	1.92	65%
Garza EC	37	1.57	55	31	49	1.58	89%
Gilliam	35	1.97	66	18	29	1.61	44%
Hillcrest	129	2.06	246	96	212	2.21	86%
Jefferson	192	1.78	304	129	223	1.73	73%
Kimball	141	1.48	173	72	108	1.50	62%
Lassiter EC	9	1.00	8	5	5	1.00	63%
Lincoln	112	2.70	280	94	242	2.57	86%
Madison	44	1.41	46	10	12	1.20	26%
Molina	182	1.87	286	101	207	2.05	72%
North Dallas	239	3.30	721	151	547	3.62	76%
Pinkston	61	1.77	95	33	69	2.09	73%
Roosevelt	105	1.87	170	41	76	1.85	45%
Samuell	180	2.18	341	106	242	2.28	71%
Seagoville	151	1.93	252	68	116	1.71	46%
Skyline	274	1.55	323	126	210	1.67	65%
S. Oak Cliff	204	1.93	350	135	262	1.94	75%
Spruce	197	2.30	420	125	247	1.98	59%
Sunset	178	2.28	373	103	205	1.99	55%
White	192	2.57	441	121	318	2.63	72%
Wilmer-	29	1.62	40	16	26	1.63	65%
Wilson	188	2.78	468	106	294	2.77	63%
Magnet High Schools							
Rangel HS	5	1.20	6	0	0	0	0%
Smith New	30	1.67	48	23	38	1.65	79%
Townview	7	1.29	9	6	8	1.33	89%
Alternative High Schools							
Angelou	5	3.20	15	0	0	0.0	0%
Patton	108	1.60	112	41	70	1.71	63%
SCGC	27	1.22	23	3	4	1.33	17%
Total	3,496	2.10	6,448	1,994	4,333	2.17	67%

Assessment of Course Performance

Reconnection Center students were required to take the district's *ACP* final examination to receive course credit for each completed semester. Figure 2 shows the percentage of tests taken by content area, and Table 4 shows the results of those tests. All tests taken were in subjects required for graduation under the student's graduation plan. Approximately half of Reconnection students (49.7%) passed semester final examinations in their courses. Passing rates varied from 16.7% (French I) to 89.6% (Spanish I), and mean scaled test scores ranged from 62 (Chemistry) to 87 (Spanish I).

Figure 2: ACP Tests Taken in Reconnection Centers by Content Area

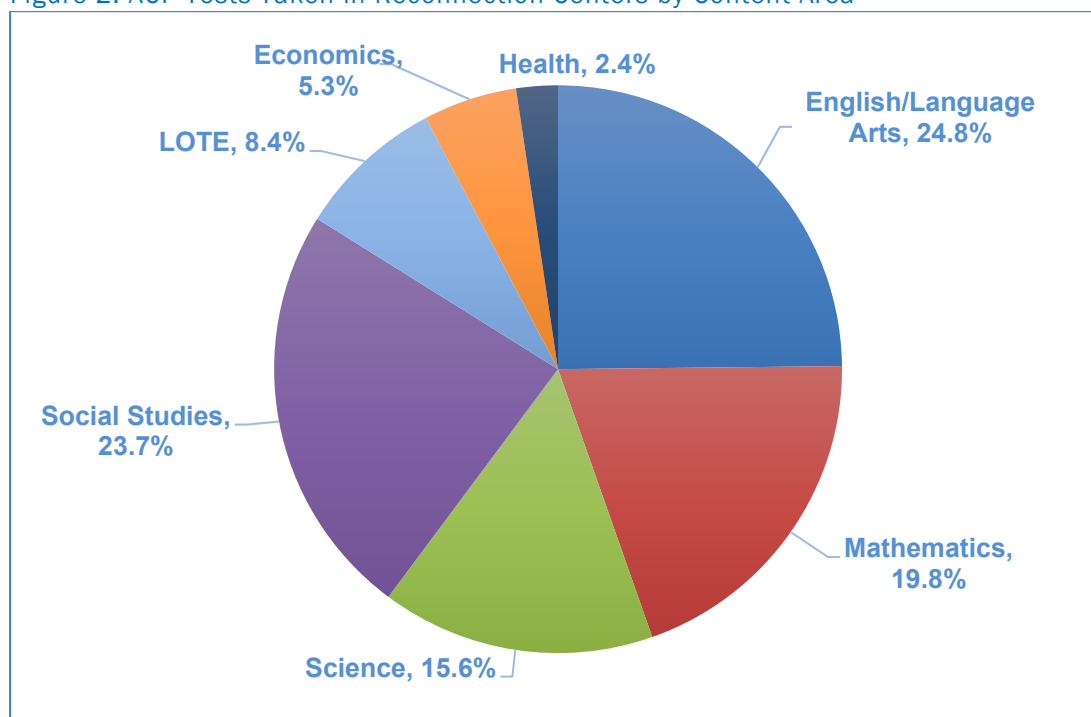


Table 4: Results of ACP Exams Administered in Reconnection Centers

Content Area/Course	Number Tested	Mean Score	Number Passing	Percent Passing
English/Language Arts				
English I	169	71	98	58.0
English II	204	69	116	56.9
English III	243	68	113	46.5
English IV	199	68	109	54.8
English/Language Arts Total	815	69	436	53.5
Mathematics				
Algebra I	152	69	68	44.7
Algebra II	181	67	56	30.9
Geometry	140	66	47	33.6
Mathematical Models with Applications	68	68	30	44.1
Pre-Calculus	109	63	24	22.0
Mathematics Total	650	67	225	34.6
Science				
Biology	139	72	86	61.9
Chemistry	172	62	40	23.3
Integrated Physics and Chemistry	28	71	16	57.1
Physics	172	63	45	26.2
Science Total	511	66	187	36.6
Social Studies				
U.S. Government	189	63	60	31.7
U. S. History	254	71	146	57.5
World Geography	188	73	111	59.0
World History	147	71	80	54.4
Social Studies Total	778	70	397	51.0
Language Other Than English				
Spanish I	134	87	120	89.6
Spanish II	136	80	113	83.1
French I	6	63	1	16.7
French II	14	63	4	28.6
LOTE Total	276	82	238	82.1
Other Courses				
Economics	175	69	91	52.0
Health	78	78	64	82.1

Credit Recovery in Grades 9, 10, and 11

The workscope key result for students in grades 9-11 was stated as: “85% of the under-credited 9th, 10th, and 11th graders in the Reconnection Center will recover credits to advance to the next grade level by July 2016.” Previous evaluations have discussed the difficulty of defining *under-credited*, especially for entering 9th graders, who typically have no high school credits on their record. However, by one definition, any student who is enrolled in the program under the new criteria is under-credited, as the first criterion for admission is that the student has failed to achieve credit in a course required by his or her graduation plan.

Table 5 shows credit gains of Reconnection Center students in Grades 9-11 between the end of the first six weeks and the end of the second semester of the 2015-2016 school year. Grade 12 is also included in this table for comparison purposes. Credit accumulation was lower at grades 9 through 11 than

the credit gains expected for students enrolled in regular classes, which generally must average six credits per year to graduate in four years, but exceeded that number at grade 12.

Table 5: Credit Gains of Reconnection Center Students

Grade	N Students	Credits		Gain
		BOY	EOY	
9	133	2.8	5.9	3.1
10	447	8.4	13.1	4.7
11	819	15.2	21.0	5.8
12	1,216	21.8	28.0	6.2

Table 6 shows the percentages of Reconnection Center students who attained the next grade level by August, 2016. Promotion rates for students in grades 9 and 10 fell far short of the goal, but 11th grade students advanced to 12th grade at a percentage (80%) approaching the intended rate of 85%.

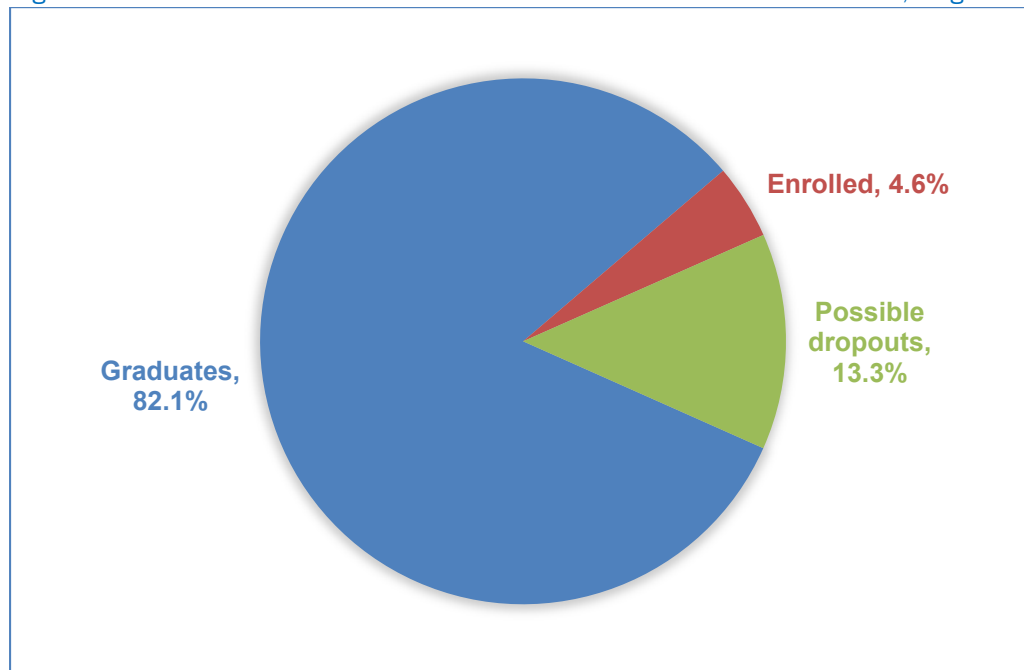
Table 6: Promotion Rates of Reconnection Center Students

Grade	N Students	Promoted	
		N	Percent
9	133	62	46.6
10	447	276	61.7
11	819	658	80.3
Total 9-11	1,399	996	71.2

Credit Recovery for Graduation in Grade 12

Figure 3 shows the graduation status of Reconnection Center 12th grade students as of August, 2016. The workscope goal stated, “85% of the 12th graders in the Reconnection Centers will recover credits to graduate with their cohort by July, 2016.” After excluding verified non-dropout leavers, a total of 975 of 1,216, or 82.1% of continuously enrolled 12th grade students who had been registered for Reconnection Center classes, graduated by the specified date. Another 4.6% were classified as continuing students, who were enrolled for the next school year, and 13.3% were either confirmed dropouts or potential dropouts whose enrollment status could not be verified. Thus, the program fell less than three percentage points short of its graduation goal. In addition, four students who began in grade 10, and, most notably, 342 students who began the year in grade 11 (as compared to 212 grade 11 students in 2014-15 and 20 in 2013-14) were able to graduate by July, largely due to credit recovery, although EOC testing waivers by Individual Graduation Committees may also have played a part in some cases.

Figure 3: Graduation Status of Grade 12 Reconnection Center Students, August 2016



SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

In 2015-16, the district operated Reconnection Centers at 28 high schools receiving State Compensatory Education funds. The purpose of the Reconnection Centers program was to provide recovery of credits for students who had failed a course or courses in a core subject area. The program allowed students to remain enrolled in courses in the traditional classroom setting on their campus while recovering credit in Reconnection Centers during assigned periods. The Districtwide Student Initiatives Department partnered with Apex Learning to provide each Reconnection Center with digital curriculum, offering Center students self-paced, personalized instruction. The Apex digital curriculum was aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards.

School counselors and Reconnection Centers facilitators worked together to identify students who were good candidates for the program. Districtwide student selection criteria and enrollment procedures newly established during the 2013-2014 school year were revised for the 2015-16 school year. The updated guidelines required that students served with SCE funds must be verified as meeting state At-Risk criteria; set minimum reading levels and course selection parameters; and required students to sign a contract stating expectations for progress in the program before admission.

Interviews with Reconnection Center facilitators indicated that support from and communication with other campus staff, particularly counselors, was considerably improved from the previous year.

Additional instructional assistance from content area teachers, particularly in science and math, continued to be identified as a critical need.

A total of 6.8% of district students in grades 9-12 were registered as enrolled in Reconnection Centers for one or more semesters during the year. Campus enrollment rates ranged from 0% to 31%. In comparison to districtwide percentages, a larger proportion of Reconnection Center students were male and At-Risk.

ACP results indicate that almost half of Center students passed semester final examinations in their Reconnection courses. The lowest *ACP* passing rates for 2015-16 were in mathematics and science.

The Reconnection workscope stated that the program should advance 85 percent of undercredited 9th, 10th, and 11th grade students served in Reconnection Centers to the next grade level. Credit accumulation was lower at grades 9 through 11 than the credit gains expected for students enrolled in regular classes, but exceeded that number at grade 12. No grade reached the 85% promotion rate target, but 11th grade students advanced to the next grade at a percentage approaching the intended rate (80%).

A second Reconnection workscope goal was that 85 percent of grade 12 Reconnection Center students would recover credits sufficiently to graduate with their class. By the specified date, 82.1% of 12th grade Reconnection students had graduated. In addition, four students who began the year in grade 10 and 342 who began the year in grade 11 were able to accumulate enough credits to graduate by July.

Recommendations

The primary recommendation from prior reports which was addressed in 2014-15 was to “create clear criteria for selecting students for the program,” including setting the required minimum reading level score at a sixth grade equivalency. A Path of Documentation was created in 2013-14 outlining enrollment procedures and criteria, and has been updated in each subsequent year. As well, counselors have been given a larger role in identifying and enrolling students in the program. Although specific counselors were to have been identified to work with Reconnection Center facilitators, counselor turnover at some schools and lack of training at others appeared to have contributed to past difficulties in appropriate student assignment. However, the Student Initiatives Department has increased efforts in both 2015-16 and for the upcoming 2016-17 school year to ensure that all counselors and administrators receive appropriate training.

Documentation of coursework has improved considerably with the Apex Learning online gradebook, but improvements are still needed. As in previous reports, it is recommended that the existing student data system be used in addition to the Apex system to record attendance and grades. With new limitations on Reconnection courses offered, and an increased emphasis on providing instruction in the five *EOC*-tested courses, one solution would be to repurpose the existing Reconnection course numbers to identify the course being taken, instead of indicating only the period during which the student attends Center classes. Class period should be identified in the same way as for any other course. Maintaining the “local credit” designation would avoid confusion with the regularly numbered content area courses. As well, before- and after-school enrollment should be recorded in GradeSpeed at every campus, even before changes to the current course numbering conventions are considered.

To address a major concern expressed by facilitators both last year and in this year's interviews, staffing should be reviewed to determine whether additional support is needed in some locations, either from an additional teacher or aide, or from content area teachers assigned to assist in Reconnection Centers during designated class periods.

Further analysis is needed to determine which students benefit most from the Reconnection program. Facilitators contend that students in grades 11 and 12 with motivation to graduate and adequate reading skills are most likely to benefit from the self-paced online coursework offered, and outcome data on credit gains, grade-level promotion, and graduation gives support to their claims. Past achievement results, current and previous course grades, attendance data, and course completion records of current program students should be analyzed in greater depth to help refine identification criteria, in order to assist schools in assigning students to Reconnection Centers who are most likely to be successful in the program.

Appendix A

Appendix A: At-Risk Criteria for 2015 - 2016

1 Row	2 Grades	3 State Criteria	4 District Interpretation
1	PK-3	Did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument administered during the current school year.	Pre-K Current school year I-SIP K-2 nd Previous school year Spring ITBS Reading Total LE 40 th %ile <u>or</u> Mathematics Total LE 40 th %ile K-3 rd Current I-SIP <u>Note.</u> If one test is missing, use available test; if both tests are missing, rely on remaining at-risk criteria.
2	7-12	Did not maintain an average equivalent to 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum during a semester in the preceding or current school year, <u>or</u> is not maintaining such an average in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum in the current semester.	If the sum of grades <u>in any one</u> of the following pairs is less than 140 during a semester in the preceding or current school year: a. English and Mathematics, b. English and Science, c. English and Social Studies, d. Mathematics and Science, e. Mathematics and Social Studies, <u>or</u> f. Science and Social Studies.
3	All	Was retained. (For one or more school years.)	Maintained same grade level status in any two consecutive school years.
4	3-12	Did not perform satisfactorily on an assessment instrument administered to the student under TEC Subchapter B, Chapter 39. Has not performed at a level equal to at least 110% of its satisfactory level in the previous or current school year.	This criterion identifies 4 population groups: (1) Students who fail to meet the raw scale cut off on any subset of TAKS/STAAR, and; (2) On subsequent TAKS/STAAR, students who perform at a level equal to 110% of the level of satisfactory on any subset of TAKS/STAAR will be exited from this at-risk category; (3) Students who do not perform at a level of satisfactory progress established by the ARD committee and; (4) On subsequent <i>TAKS/STAAR-Modified</i> or <i>TAKS/STAAR-Alt</i> , students who meet the assessment goal determined by the ARD will be exited from the at-risk category.
5	All	Is pregnant, or is a parent.	Has been identified as pregnant during the current school year and/or is a parent.
6	All	Has been placed in an alternative education program during the preceding or current school year.	Has been placed in a disciplinary alternative education program during the preceding or current school year.
7	All	Has been expelled during the preceding or current school year.	Has been expelled during the preceding or current school year.

table continues

Table (continued)

1 Row	2 Grades	3 State Criteria	4 District Interpretation
8	All	Is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution, or other conditional release.	Each campus is required to identify and provide appropriate services to this population. Due to confidentiality, safety, and security requirements, each campus is required to maintain documentation verifying the provision of supplemental services to identified students.
9	All	Is a dropout. (Was previously reported through the PEIMS to have dropped out of school.)	Is a dropout <u>or</u> has been previously reported through the PEIMS to have dropped out of school.
10	All	Is LEP.	Is LEP on <u>latest database snapshot</u> .
11	All	Is in the custody or care of the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services or has, during the current school year been referred to the department by a school official, officer of the juvenile court, or law enforcement official.	Each campus is required to identify and provide appropriate services to this population. Due to confidentiality, safety, and security requirements, each campus is required to maintain documentation verifying the provision of supplemental services to identified students.
12	All	Is homeless.	Has been identified as homeless based on McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001.
13	All	Resided in the preceding school year or resides in the current school year in a residential placement facility in the district. Includes a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.	Resided during the preceding school year or currently resides in a residential placement facility in the district. Includes a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, or foster group home.

Note. An at-risk student, for the 2015-2016 school year, is defined as any student who is under 26 years of age and meets one or more of the criteria in column 4. House Bill 5 (2013) raised the age limit from 21 to 26 years of age beginning in the 2014-2015 school year.