

Summer Programs: 2015-2016

At-a-Glance

The Dallas Independent School District's (ISD) Department of Summer Learning and Extended-Day Services provided the Summer Readiness Program (SRP) at each elementary and middle school for 7,006 kindergarten through eighth-grade students needing remedial instruction. The SRP was an intensive eight-day program designed for students that did not meet the criteria for promotion set forth by the Dallas ISD's Board of Trustees. Each campus hosted qualifying students from that school.

At 10 campuses across the district, the high school Credit-Recovery Program (CRP) allowed students to recover up to one full credit for failed high school courses. Sites also offered from two to six accelerated courses. Three sites served as training centers for Compass and Teach For America's (TFA) alternative certification interns.

The Summer Achievers' Academy (SAA) was a full-day program designed for PK through eighth-grade students who could benefit from additional instruction during the summer months to stem summer learning loss. Campus administrators and teachers recruited students to the program. Elementary programs included core instruction in reading/language arts and mathematics. Middle school programs provided instruction in reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Big Thought, a non-profit organization focusing on arts enrichment, provided a variety of activities for students during the afternoons. The activities included subjects such as culinary arts, music, and athletics. Each elementary and middle school campus served as a training center for alternative certification interns with either the Dallas ISD's Compass program or TFA.

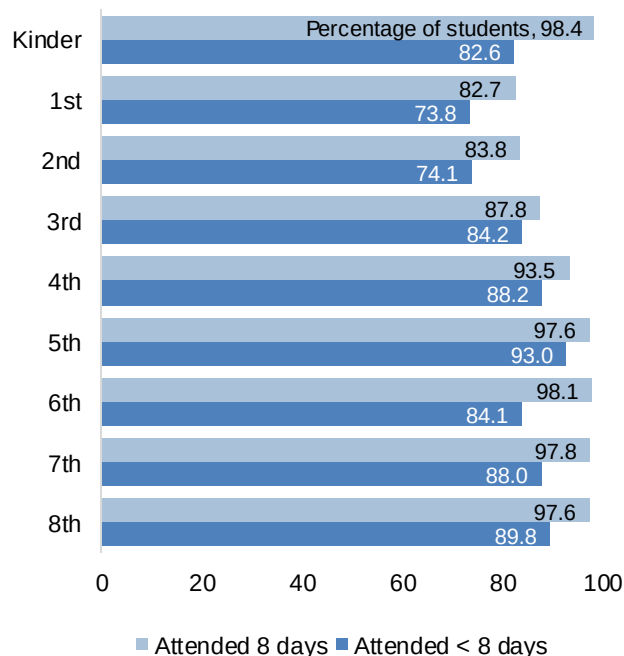
Summer Readiness Program

Evaluation staff reviewed the district's Summer Learning Handbook and the policy of the Board of Trustees to determine elementary and middle school guidelines for retention. Campus staff tracked attendance using a district-developed application. Upon the SRP's conclusion, program administrators provided the evaluators with a spreadsheet of attendance data which were matched with demographic information

(June 6, 2016) and attendance (September 7, 2016). The attendance application clearly indicated students attending the program as part of the Student Success Initiative¹ or as part of the SRP, but not as part of both programs. Also, the attendance application did not differentiate between students required to attend and those invited to attend. The SRP analyses only included students that met the SRP qualifications.

Overall, 6,110 students (87%) matriculated to the next grade at the beginning of the 2016-17 school year. Figure 1 shows the promotion rates for students attending fewer than eight days and all eight days of the program by grade. In order to be promoted, students in grades three through eight must have attended all eight days of the program. For students who attended all eight days of the program, promotion rates ranged from 83 percent of first-grade students to 98 percent of kindergarten and fifth- through eighth-grade students. Over 84 percent of sixth-grade students and 93 percent of fifth-grade students were promoted despite attending fewer than eight days.

Figure 1. Promotion Rates of Summer Readiness Program Students Attending and not Attending 8 Days



¹ The SSI program hosted fifth- and eighth-grade students who were required to pass the reading and mathematics *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* subtests.

Credit-Recovery Program

Ten high school sites across the district hosted the CRP.² The lead evaluator consulted the Summer Learning Handbook for program dates and operational details. Attendance, demographic characteristics, and course performance data were extracted from the district's summer database. Descriptive and frequency analyses were conducted.

Past evaluations revealed that students have received course credit without attending at least 90 percent of the instructional days, as per district policy. To prevent this, Summer Learning Department removed students from the summer database as the students gained more than two absences. When extracted for analyses, the summer database included the 4,014 students who attended 17 or more days. So, attendance for all students who attended the program were not provided.

High school course passing rates were generally high, with 87 percent the lowest rate for semester 1 Algebra I students. All other course passing rates were higher than 92 percent. Every student meeting the attendance criterion of 17 days passed the nine courses reviewed.

Final ACP scores were lower than course grades with the exception of Communication Applications. For semester 1 and semester 2 Algebra I courses, the students' average scale scores of 66 and 68 were below the passing score of 70. English I, semester 1 students averaged a scale score of 67. In two courses where 100 percent of the students passed the course (semester 1 Physics and semester 2 Pre-Calculus), average ACP scores were below 70.

Summer Achievers Academy

Attendance. The evaluators extracted student attendance information from the district's summer database. Frequency and crosstab analyses were conducted. The five elementary sites³ had 1,517 students attending at least one day. Middle school participation was lower, with 255 students attending the program at one of three middle school campuses.⁴

Operations Checklists. The evaluators developed first-day and mid-program checklists to assess campus environment and operations. The results revealed clean campuses that operated smoothly. However, campuses experienced problems such as addressing parent needs, enrolling students, and busing delays. Most

problems were resolved by mid-program, but buses arrived late throughout the program.

Classroom Observations. Observers conducted 35-minute academic classroom observations on July 18 and July 19 and enrichment observations from July 20 through July 25. The observers collected data on student activities at four timepoints during the observation. Frequency and crosstab analyses of the timepoint data indicated that all students were actively working during more than half of the academic timepoints ($n = 219$, 51.0%). Half or more of the students were off task at 12 timepoints (2.8%) and student behavior disrupted the lesson during eight percent of the timepoints.

In the enrichment classes, all students were actively working during nearly 72 percent of the observed timepoints ($n = 141$, 71.9%). Half or more of the students were off task at 12 timepoints (2.8%), and student behavior disrupted the lesson during seven percent of the timepoints.

Academic Achievement. Students took pre-tests in each academic course on the first day of the program and a post-test when the program concluded in late July. Mentor teachers at five of the eight campuses entered student answers. No one entered student answers at the remaining three campuses. Because the data entry was not standardized, teachers input many different responses to the same questions, making the files unusable for this evaluation.

Principal Interviews and Teacher Surveys. The evaluators conducted interviews with all SAA principals by telephone from July 14 to July 20. The evaluator developed the interview protocol which included questions related to the principals' responsibilities, goals for the program, and program implementation. Mentor teachers and interns completed surveys. The evaluator coded open-ended responses based on salient topics from principal interviews.

Results of the surveys showed that, early in the SAA, many training teachers reported a lack of materials. Some lessons required copies of worksheets or handouts, and teachers reported that they were not given access to copy machines or printers. Some mentor teachers and most principals reported that, for many SAA students, the curriculum was limited, bland, and functioned as a review from the previous school year. Some teachers wrote that the curriculum was

² Sites were North Dallas, Lincoln, Conrad, Kimball, Molina, Spruce, Adamson, Jefferson, Adams, and Samuell High Schools.

³ The elementary SAA sites were Dunbar, Cigarroa, Burleson, Salazar, and Reilly Elementary Schools.

⁴ The middle school SAA sites were Comstock, Medrano, and Dade Middle Schools.

helpful for the lower-achieving students. Many principals and mentor teachers related that students and parents may not have understood what the students would experience in the academic classrooms. Rather than academic lessons delivered much as they would be during the regular school year, principals stated that parents expected an environment similar to what a summer camp would provide.

Social-Emotional Learning. In May 2016, regular school year teachers of students who applied to attend the SAA completed the *Devereaux Student Strengths Assessment-Mini (DESSA-Mini)*, a measure of students' social-emotional learning skills. SAA enrichment instructors completed the *DESSA-Mini* for their students at the end of the summer program. Using pairs of repeated-measures Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) for each campus level, the evaluator compared ratings for the 231 elementary and 27 middle school students with pre- and post-program scores, then repeated the analysis for the 115 elementary and 17 middle school students rated as typical or needs instruction before the program.

When looking at only students initially rated as needing instruction or typical, both elementary and middle school students received significantly higher average ratings at the end of the SAA program. Overall analyses showed growth for middle school students but not elementary students. Elementary needs and typical student ratings averaged 49.0 at the end of the 2015-16 school year and increased to 56.3 after the program, $F(1, 114) = 29.46, p < .025$. The effect size, as indicated by η^2 , represents a moderate effect ($\eta^2 = .21$). Average ratings for needs and typical middle school students were significantly higher after the program ($M = 62.3$) than before the program ($M = 47.2$), $F(1, 16) = 42.82, p < .025$. This indicated a large practical effect ($\eta^2 = .73$). The middle school results should be considered cautiously because of the low number of students included in the analyses.

Alternative Certification Intern Training

The Dallas ISD's Compass alternative certification program had 113 interns teaching during the SAA and high school CRP. Over 69 percent of the interns completed the program ($n = 78$) and received placement for the 2016-17 school year. Two interns withdrew from the program and two were dismissed for performance issues; 31 interns (27%) were dismissed because they did not pass the content certification exams. TFA began the summer with 204 interns teaching for the SAA and CRP programs. Of those, 104 were slated to teach with the Dallas ISD. Over 96 percent of the TFA interns slated to teach in the Dallas ISD completed the program ($n = 100$).

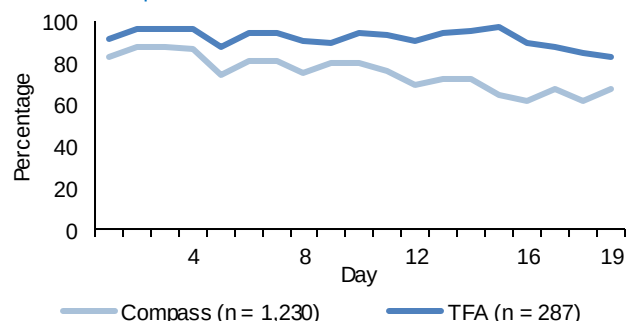
The evaluator conducted interviews with all eight SAA principals by telephone from July 14 to July 20. The evaluator-developed, semi-structured interview protocol included questions related to the principals' motivations to work the position, responsibilities, goals for the program, and program implementation. Mentors and alternative certification interns completed surveys. The evaluator coded the open-ended survey responses based on salient topics from principal interviews.

While the training teachers appreciated experienced mentors in every classroom, several mentor teachers reported that they did not meet the interns they would be working with until the first day of the program. Additionally, mentors had little time to debrief with interns after observing lessons. Most principals and some teachers reported that they were unclear about their expectations going into the SAA. A few principals noted that they expected to be the instructional leader at the summer site. However, because TFA and Compass directed instruction toward their goals, principals did not have an instructional role.

Mentor teachers and interns expressed frustration in two areas where the program did not represent what the interns would experience during the regular school year: small middle school class sizes and lack of autonomy when developing lessons. Some middle school classes had as few as four students. Lesson plans were developed and scripted by TFA, and while they allowed teachers some opportunities to edit them, the core of the plan was already in place and they were expected to follow the script.

The evaluators extracted student daily attendance from the district's summer database and compared the percentage of students attending each day by the alternative certification program operating at each site – Compass or TFA. The overall and daily attendance rates at Cigarroa – the TFA site – were higher than all other elementary campuses throughout the program (see Figure 2). Middle school attendance rates did not differ by program.

Figure 2. Percentage of Students Attending Sites by Day: TFA and Compass



Recommendations

Modify enrollment procedures for the SRP to include all reasons a student may have attended the program. For fifth- and eighth-grade students, the SRP data only marked students as attending based on either STAAR failure or course failure – not both. A complete evaluation of the SRP should include all students who failed two or more core courses, not just those that failed courses but passed the STAAR.

Collaborate with the district's School Administrative Services Department to prevent campuses from granting course credit for students not meeting the criteria for credit while retaining data on the students in the summer database. High school students were removed from the district's summer database after administrators determined that they had accumulated more than two absences, the maximum allowed to receive course credit. Because data from these students were unavailable, overall high school CRP enrollment, attendance rates, and other areas could not be assessed.

Ensure students in the high school CRP pass both courses and final exams. Course passing rates ranged from 87 to 100 percent; however, average ACP scores for eight of 32 courses were below the passing score of 70.

Ensure that buses for the SAA arrive at campuses on time and minimize delays when dropping off students. Observers and principals reported bus issues. Many principals related that some parents removed their children from the program because of concerns with busing.

Confirm that campuses have all supplies on campus prior to the first day of the SAA. Principals and teachers reported that they had to alter lessons to accommodate for missing supplies or supplies that had not yet been delivered. Because the teachers are expected to deliver the lessons provided, all materials should be provided and delivered to campuses before the start of the program.

Consider eliminating pre-testing of students for the SAA and administer post-tests using scannable answer sheets. Principals, in particular, thought that pre-testing on the first day of the program was not engaging and created a poor perception of the program among some parents and students. Principals and teachers believed that many students stopped attending the program because of initial perceptions of the academic program. No testing data was entered for three SAA campuses and data entry was not

standardized at the other five campuses, making the data unsuitable for analysis in this report.

Provide parents and students with clear descriptions of the SAA program, academic courses, in particular. Principals reported that parents expected a more relaxed, "summer camp" environment rather than academic classes similar to what the students experienced during the regular school year.

Consider incorporating methods used at TFA campuses to lessen student attrition. Principals at the TFA program sites commended staff and interns for their work encouraging students and parents to remain in the program. Middle school sites showed no differences in attendance rates among the TFA and Compass sites. The TFA elementary site, however, maintained high attendance rates throughout the program. The percentage of students attending every day of the program was over 2.25 times higher than at other sites.

Provide joint professional development sessions for mentor teachers and interns prior to the start of the SAA. Mentor teachers reported that they received very little professional development prior to the program, and they met the interns that they would be guiding on the first day of the program. All principals and many mentor teachers conveyed that a cooperative professional development session would have solidified the expectations and roles for all teachers in the classroom, mentors and interns alike.

Consider including summer principals in the planning process for the alternative certification intern training. The summer principals expected to be the instructional leaders on their respective campuses. Because TFA and Compass dictated the lesson delivery, observations, and feedback, the summer principals did not serve in this role. To allow SAA principals to gain a more complete principal experience and to strengthen campus instructional leadership during the summer, consider including future summer principals in summer curricular decisions.

The full 2015-16 summer evaluation report can be found at <http://www.dallasisd.org/page/888>.