

Updated Evaluation of the Dallas ISD Birth to Five Initiatives 2015-16

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EA16-170-4

At-a-Glance

Istation provided recalibrated Istation's Indicators of Progress data for the fall 2015 English administration in January 2017. As a result, relevant text, tables, and figures were updated.

The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Early Childhood and Community Partnerships (ECCP) department provides services to children from birth through grade two. In 2015-16, the total budget for the ECCP department was \$2,737,153. This included \$2,396,327 of general operating funds and \$340,826 of Title II, Part A funds. A department goal was to improve kindergarten readiness through the expansion of the prekindergarten (PK) program. The purpose of this report was to describe Dallas ISD's birth to five initiatives designed to increase kindergarten readiness. This included an examination of the context of ECCP department services, staff perceptions, kindergarten readiness, and kindergarten assessment outcomes by PK enrollment.

Strategic Planning and Progress

A focus of the ECCP department was increasing kindergarten readiness. To reach this goal, ECCP staff endeavored to increase demand for and access to PK, increase quality, increase community partnerships, and expand the continuum of care for children from birth to three years old. To increase access and demand, the district opened two early childhood centers and collaborated with 19 community childcare centers so that Dallas ISD teachers taught students in these settings. To improve PK quality, the ECCP department introduced PK specialists into the classroom to provide individual support for teachers. Another attempt to increase quality was a focus on assessing socioemotional learning. The *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)*,¹ an observation instrument, was administered by Southern Methodist University to measure the quality of teachers' interactions with students. ECCP staff fostered community partnerships with Commit!² and community childcare centers. To expand the continuum of care, students from birth to three could receive services through the Home

Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)³ program and AVANCE.⁴

Characteristics of Prekindergarten Students

In 2015-16, there were 10,371 students enrolled in early childhood (EC) education, community partnership programs, and Dallas ISD PK (390, 1,002, and 8,899, respectively). Over half of the students were male (51.1%), economically disadvantaged (93.4%), and/or English Language Learners (ELLs; 52.8%).

Staff Perceptions of the Prekindergarten Program

An interview with the curriculum and instruction manager indicated that 29 PK specialists⁵ provided individualized, tiered support to a maximum of 15 teachers each. First, specialists participated in professional development (PD) programs including Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage training, CLASS observer certification training, Making the Most of Classroom Interactions (MMCI) training, and coaching training. Then, specialists provided teachers with trainings about the CLASS (including the CLASS Academy), the *Circle* assessment, the Opening the World of Learning (OWL) curriculum (the main PK curriculum) and best practices, and Just in Time trainings. The department also provided a Summer Institute and a two-day training about student activity centers. Lastly, the ECCP department provided training for teachers in third-party settings and for teacher assistants.

Specialist Interviews and Observations. Four specialists were interviewed and observed. During interviews, the specialists defined their role as supporting and coaching teachers. Noted successes included seeing teachers implement suggestions, improve, and take ownership of their progress. Specialists' greatest challenges were getting teachers to implement suggestions consistently and interacting with the few teachers and/or administrators who resisted help. During observations, the specialists used several different modalities to work with teachers; these included observation, communication, demonstrations, and hands-on assistance.

¹ For more information, see <http://teachstone.com/classroom-assessment-scoring-system/>.

² For more information, see <http://cominit2dallas.org/>.

³ For more information, see Palladino (2016).

⁴ For more information, see <https://avance-dallas.org/> or Palladino (2016).

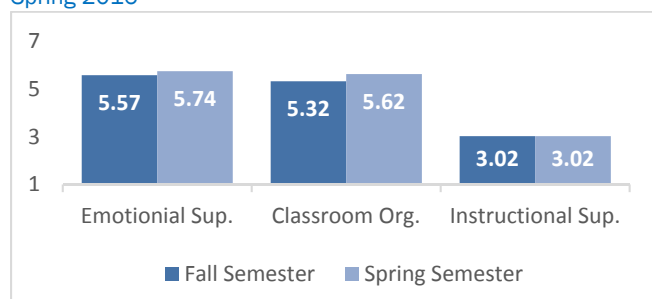
⁵ As of December 2015.

PK Teacher Survey. PK teacher survey respondents (309 teachers; 67.5% of PK teachers) were mostly positive (“agree” or “strongly agree”) toward the PK program (81% to 96%), the support and resources they received (73% to 88%), the PK specialists (85% to 93%), and the PD provided by the ECCP department (83% to 88%). Additionally, most teachers rated the ECCP trainings as “somewhat helpful” or “very helpful” (92% to 97%). The most-cited successes were administrator support (n=55) and increased student achievement (n=54). The most commonly referenced challenges were student behavior problems (n=40), lack of materials and/or resources (n=37), and conflicting information from campus and ECCP department staff (n=26). The main suggestion was increasing resources (n=40).

Quality of Prekindergarten Instruction

Results of the *CLASS* indicated that the district was above the quality threshold for both semesters in the emotional support (threshold = 5.00) and classroom organization domains (threshold = 5.00; Figure 1); both domains showed statistically and practically significant⁶ increases from fall to spring ($t(453)=4.17, p<.001, d=.23$ and $t(453)=6.92, p<.001, d=.30$, respectively). The district was below the quality threshold in the instructional support domain (threshold = 3.25; Figure 1); there was no change between semesters ($t(453)=.09, p=.93, d=.01$). The district’s teachers were strongest in emotional support and weakest in instructional support. While more than 70 percent of teachers met the quality thresholds for emotional support and classroom organization, less than 40 percent of teachers met the quality threshold for instructional support, which means that about 60 percent did not.

Figure 1: *CLASS* Raw Domain Score Averages for Fall 2015 and Spring 2016



Source. Data provided by SMU, received 2/4/16 and 6/19/16.

Note. Sup.=Support; Org=Organization. Possible scores ranged from one to seven; actual scores spanned the entire range.

Student Outcomes on 2015-16 *ISIP* (Updated with Fall 2015 *ISIP* Recalibrated Data)

There were notably more students tested in the middle and end of the year than in the beginning of the year. Even with this increase, less than half of the students enrolled in four year old PK (n=8,597) were tested at any given time point. *Thus, comparisons across administrations and overall results should be reviewed with caution.*

Across Istation’s *Indicators of Progress (ISIP)* administrations, the percentage of PK students tested in Spanish that scored at or above grade level (*ISIP* Tier 1) increased from 52 percent (beginning of the year) to 62 percent (middle of the year) to 67 percent (end of the year). Students tested in English did not show a consistent pattern of increase (e.g., 56% at the beginning of the year to 46% at the middle to 48% at the end).

Across the three time periods assessed, the overall percentages of PK students at or above grade level for the English and Spanish administrations combined were between 54 percent and 59 percent. Whereas 46 to 56 percent of students tested in English were at or above grade level, over 50 percent (52% to 67%) of PK students tested in Spanish were at or above grade level. Districtwide data showed that more students who tested in Spanish performed at or above grade level than those that tested in English with the exception of the beginning-of-the-year administration (Table 1).

Theoretically, students’ scores should improve during the school year. However, for English the percentage of students at or above grade level at the beginning of the year was higher than the percentage at or above grade level in the middle of the year. From the middle of the year to the end of the year, scores increased, though the scores did not reach the beginning of the year level. The Spanish and English and Spanish combined administrations showed a steady increase across the 2015-16 school year (Table 1).

⁶ Cohen’s *d* is a measure of effect size and is indicative of practical significance; small=.20, medium=.50, and large=.80 (Cohen, 1988).

Table 1: Percentage of PK Students Performing At or Above Grade on 2015-16 *ISIP* by version

Version	Updated BOY* n tested (%)	MOY n tested (%)	EOY n tested (%)
Combined	2,363 (54)	3,865 (55)	3,493 (59)
English	1,074 (56)	1,613 (46)	1,455 (48)
Spanish	1,289 (52)	2,252 (62)	2,038 (67)

Source: PEIMS district database: 10/30/2015; *ISIP*: 6/17/16 for MOY and EOY; 1/31/17 for BOY.

Note. Time period - BOY (Beginning of the year): September 1, to September 30, 2015; MOY (Middle of the year): January 6, to January 27, 2016; EOY (End of the year): May 2, to May 27, 2016.

*Istation provided recalibrated data for the fall 2015 English administration in January 2017. District *ISIP* data were pulled for both the English and Spanish administrations and were combined into one file to allow for examination of overall student performance.⁷ If a student completed the assessment in both languages, departmental guidelines were used to determine which assessment to include in the combined dataset.⁸ If a student took the test more than once, the latest score was used in all datasets.

Differences in Kindergarten Readiness by Prekindergarten Enrollment Status (Updated with Fall 2015 *ISIP* Recalibrated Data)

There were 8,974 kindergarten students that took *ISIP* in September of 2015 that were previously eligible to receive Dallas ISD PK. About 51 percent of these students were kindergarten ready (scored at or above grade level; Table 2). A higher percentage of students who were previously enrolled in Dallas ISD PK (*DISD PK*; 60.7%) were kindergarten ready than students who were eligible but did not attend Dallas ISD PK (*No DISD PK*; 28.5%).

Table 2: Updated* Percentage of PK Eligible Kindergarten Students Performing At or Above Grade Level on *ISIP* by version and Enrollment Status⁹

Version	DISD PK n tested (%)	No DISD PK n tested (%)	Total n tested (%)
Combined	6,282 (61)	2,692 (29)	8,974 (51)
English	2,296 (49)	1,654 (22)	3,950 (38)
Spanish	3,986 (67)	1,038 (38)	5,024 (61)

Source: PEIMS district database: 10/30/2015; *ISIP*: 1/31/17.

Note. Time period – BOY. *Istation provided recalibrated data for the fall 2015 English administration in January 2017. District *ISIP* data were pulled for both the English and Spanish administrations and were combined into one file to allow for examination of overall student performance.¹⁰ If a student completed the assessment in both languages, departmental guidelines were used to determine which assessment to include in the combined dataset.¹¹ If a student took the test more than once, the latest score was used in all datasets.

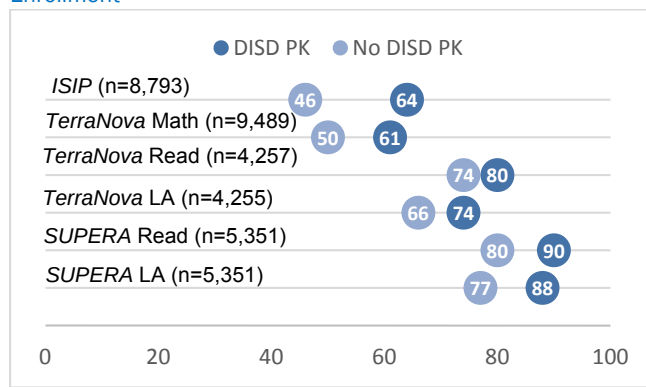
⁷ Comparisons between the English and Spanish versions of *ISIP* are not recommended because the two versions are normed differently. Therefore, the percentage of students at or above Tier 1 (which indicates performing at grade level) was used.

⁸ Staff members from Evaluation and Assessment, ECCP, and Bilingual/ESL worked together to develop *ISIP* data guidelines. The purpose of these guidelines is to ensure consistent reporting of *ISIP* data across departments and over time.

Differences in Kindergarten Scores by Prekindergarten Enrollment Status

Results showed that 2015-16 kindergarten students that attended Dallas ISD PK (*DISD PK*) significantly outperformed those PK eligible students who did not attend Dallas ISD PK (*No DISD PK*) across test types (*ISIP*, *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*; Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of Kindergarten Students At or Above Grade Level on Assessments for the 2015-16 Cohort by Dallas ISD PK Enrollment¹²



Source: PEIMS district database: 10/20/15; *ISIP*: 6/17/16; *TerraNova*: 6/9/16; *SUPERA*: 6/9/16.

Note. *ISIP* includes English and Spanish combined EOY data to allow for examination of overall student performance.¹³ If a student completed the assessment in both languages, departmental guidelines were used to determine which assessment to include in the combined dataset.¹⁴ If a student took the test more than once, the latest score was used. Math = mathematics; Read = Reading; LA = Language Arts.

Recommendations

Continue implementing the district plan, using PK specialists, and providing group PD for teachers. Training about expectations should also be provided to campus administrators. The ECCP department should continue increasing kindergarten readiness using the district plan. The department should also continue providing support to teachers through the PK specialist program and group PD sessions as both received positive feedback from teachers. The department should address the discontinuity reported by teachers between the department and some campus administrators by providing information about guidelines and about developmentally appropriate expectations for PK.

⁹ To allow for accurate comparison between *DISD PK* and *No DISD PK* groups, only those kindergarten students who met the PK eligibility requirements were included in this sample.

¹⁰ See footnote 7.

¹¹ See footnote 8.

¹² See footnote 9.

¹³ See footnote 7.

¹⁴ See footnote 8.

Train PK teachers to provide more effective instructional support for students. About 60 percent of teachers did not meet the quality threshold for instructional support. Thus, the department should make efforts to improve teachers' support of children's cognitive and language development. This could be accomplished using group PD sessions or individual coaching with PK specialists.

Create a standardized testing protocol to ensure the accuracy of student achievement data. Less than half of enrolled four-year-old PK students took *ISIP* during the district testing windows. The district should require that all four-year-old PK students complete the same assessment during the district testing windows. This would provide more accurate information about how PK students develop through the course of the academic year.

References

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Palladino, D. (2016). Evaluation of AVANCE 2015-16. Dallas Independent School District. In Press.

Palladino, D. (2016). Evaluation of the 2015-16 Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPPY) Program. Dallas Independent School District. In Press.

The full final evaluation report for the 2015-16 Birth to Five Initiatives can be found at <http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888>. For more information, contact Program Evaluation at 972-925-6457.