

After-School Programs, 2015-2016

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At-a-Glance

The Dallas Independent School District's (Dallas ISD) Extended-Day Services Department provided the Dallas After-School Achievers (DASA) program to approximately 540 students (11.3% of eligible students) at nine elementary schools across the district. Another program, St. Simon's Afterschool, operated at 13 elementary campuses throughout west Dallas. Approximately 629 students (8.0% of eligible students) attended the St. Simon's program.

Both programs operated from 3:15 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., most often in the schools' cafeterias with small group instruction in various classrooms. Parents could begin picking up students at 5:00 p.m. All but three sites offered programming five days per week. Those sites – two DASA and one St. Simon's – did not operate on Fridays. The goals for the programs were to: provide children a safe place after school, provide a snack, assist with homework, increase academic achievement, and provide an environment supporting the students' social and emotional growth. The programs were free for all participating students. Several programmatic activities that were offered to students were provided by the Boys and Girls Clubs and Junior Players, an arts-focused educational non-profit. These activities included those as varied as theatre; dance; culinary arts; visual arts; athletics; career introductions; community studies; geography; and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. St. Simon's Afterschool partnered with iStation reading, a computer-based system that provides reading instruction that is complementary to core curriculum. This allowed students of all grade levels opportunities to use the software several days per week.

Each campus had a site manager and assistants – all staff who served students during the regular school day. Site managers at every campus recorded student attendance, contact information, and emergency information in a shared spreadsheet. Most programs' first days ranged from after the first week of the school year to the first six-week grading period. One site began serving students after the second six-week grading period. The evaluator compared the demographic characteristics of after-school students with the characteristics of other students at the same schools. The evaluator compared school attendance by after-school participation, after-school program, and grade. After-school attendance was compared by program, DASA or St. Simon's.

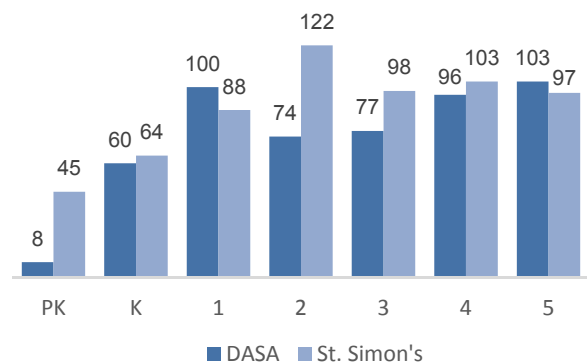
After-school participation has been shown to have a positive impact on students' academic achievement (Fashola, 1998; Halpern, 2004). For this reason, the evaluator compared the 2015-16 *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* reading and mathematics scores for after-school students to the scores of a comparison group of students at the same campuses not attending the DASA or St. Simon's after-school programs. It is important to note that students in the comparison group may have attended an after-school program offered outside the Dallas ISD, in which case data were not available.

Department staff improved attendance tracking at all sites. During the 2014-15 school year, 63 percent of after-school students were properly recorded (Mickelson, 2015). During the 2015-16 school year, the percentage rose to 97 percent. Despite the gains, campus attendance spreadsheets instructed after-school staff to record student absences, leading to days that the program did not operate yet all students were recorded as present. Additionally, while department staff instructed managers to enter an "X" if students were absent, managers entered other characters which resulted in inaccurate data.

Demographics

The number of program students in the upper grades (first through fifth) was considerably higher than in prekindergarten and kindergarten (see Figure 1). The most populated grades for DASA included first ($n = 100$) and fifth ($n = 103$), whereas St. Simon's largest grades were second ($n = 122$) and fourth ($n = 103$).

Figure 1: Number of Program Students by Grade



Note: Demographics data were missing for 34 students that attended DASA ($n = 22$) and St. Simon's ($n = 12$).

The demographic characteristics of after-school students generally mirrored the characteristics of non-program students at the same schools (see Table 1). However, a higher percentage of program students were African American in comparison to non-program counterparts. A smaller percentage of program students than non-program students were English language learners. Female students were over-represented in the DASA program (58%) when compared with non-program students (49%); the proportion of female students in the St. Simon's program (47%) was similar to non-program students (49%).

Table 1: Demographics of Program and Non-Program Students

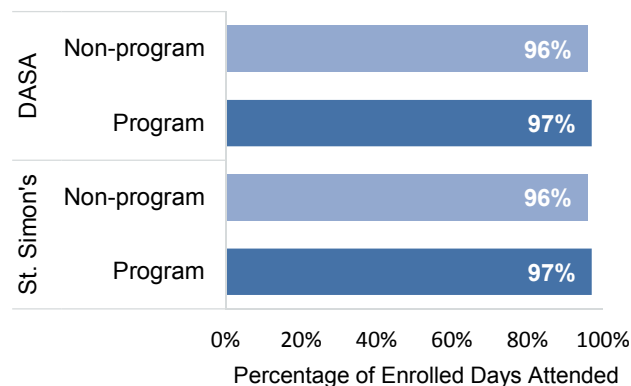
Demographic Variable	Non-Program Students*		DASA		St. Simon's	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Race						
Asian	79	1	3	1	11	2
African American	2,838	25	198	38	192	31
Hispanic	8,284	72	304	59	400	65
Native American	33	<1	0	0	0	0
Two or More Races	32	<1	1	<1	5	1
White	191	2	12	2	9	2
Sex						
Female	5,600	49	301	58	293	47
Male	5,857	51	217	42	324	53
English Language Learner						
Yes	5,965	52	198	38	159	26
No	5,492	48	320	62	458	74
Receives Special Education Services						
Yes	832	7	25	5	37	6
No	10,625	93	493	95	580	94
Economically Disadvantaged						
Yes	10,469	91	430	83	553	90
No	988	9	88	17	64	10

Note: Demographics data were missing for 34 students that attended DASA ($n = 22$) and St. Simon's ($n = 12$) programs. Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to exactly 100 percent. *Non-program students were students at the same schools as program students that did not attend an after-school program.

Attendance

Program students attended school at roughly the same rate as non-program students (see Figure 2). Program students for both DASA and St. Simon's attended 97 percent of their enrolled days, and non-attending students attended 96 percent of their enrolled days.

Figure 2: Attendance Rates for Program and Non-Program Students

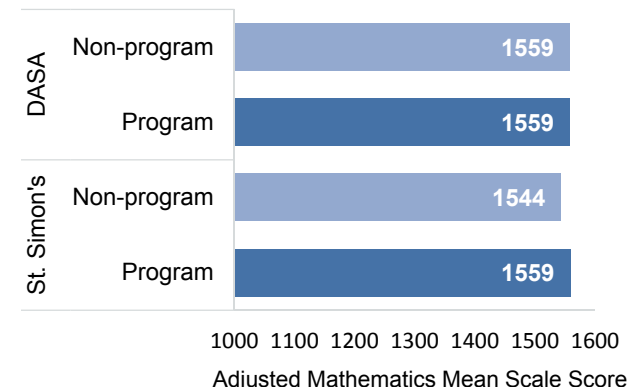


Mathematics and Reading Achievement

The evaluator conducted two one-way analyses of covariance to assess differences between after-school participants and non-participants at the same campuses on reading and mathematics STAAR scores. Because the analyses required two years of data, only fourth- and fifth-grade students were included. Students with outlying scale scores below 1000 were excluded from the analyses.

The after-school participants' average 2015-16 mathematics scale score was not significantly different for program and non-program students with DASA or St. Simon's after accounting for previous mathematics performance (see Figure 3). DASA students and non-program students averaged 1559 points. The St. Simon's After-School students' adjusted average was 1559 compared to 1544 for non-program students. Participating in an afterschool program had very little effect on mathematics achievement.

Figure 3: Average Adjusted 2015-16 STAAR Mathematics Scale Scores by Program Status

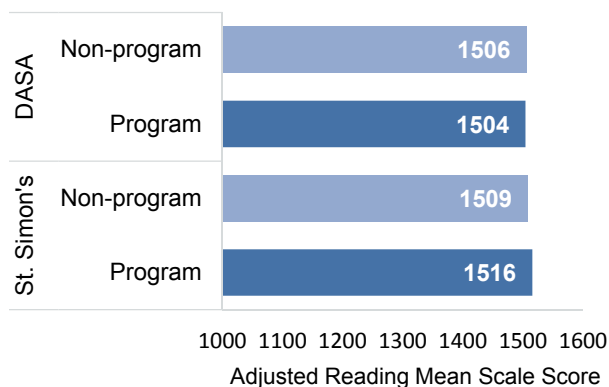


Note: Means adjusted after accounting for prior performance

The after-school participants' average 2015-16 reading scale score was not significantly different for program

and non-program students with either DASA or St. Simon's programs after accounting for previous reading performance (see Figure 4). DASA students averaged 1504 points and non-program students averaged 1506 points. The Simon's Afterschool students' adjusted average was 1516, higher than the 1509 for non-program students. Participating in the DASA after-school program had no effect on reading achievement; students with the St. Simon's program showed some reading improvement, though it was not significant.

Figure 4: Average Adjusted 2015-16 STAAR Reading Scale Scores by Program Status



Note: Means adjusted after accounting for prior performance

Recommendations

The Extended-Day Services Department should work with St. Simon's Afterschool to provide reading achievement data for students using iStation. Broad analyses of STAAR scores limited the analyses to fourth and fifth grade students and indicated no difference in reading achievement among program and non-program students. Additional student data across more grade levels would create a more accurate and comprehensive evaluation.

Program administrators should continue to emphasize the importance of collecting accurate and reliable attendance data. Site managers showed much improvement collecting data from previous years, and the number of students with incorrect identifying information was reduced from 47 percent to under 3 percent over one school year.

Program administrators should adjust attendance tracking procedures. Flagging only absent students may have falsely indicated that many absent students were present, especially when the students had stopped attending the program. The shared attendance spreadsheets should only allow staff members to input a single value indicating that a student is present, increasing data accuracy and reliability.

References

Fashola, O. (1998). *Review of extended-day and after-school programs and their effectiveness*. Report No. 24. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk.

Halpern, R. (2004). *Confronting the big pie: The need to reframe expectations of afterschool programs*. New York: Partnership for After School Education.

Mickelson, N. (October 2015). *After-school programs: 2014-2015*. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

For more information contact Program Evaluation at (972) 925-6457.