

College and Career Readiness: The Gifted and Talented Program, 2015-16

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At-a-Glance

The Texas State Plan for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students was revised in 2009. The revisions included requirements and guidance for schools to meet the unique needs of the Gifted and Talented population in the state. The purpose of the Gifted and Talented (GT) program was to implement, maintain, and support a variety of instructional strategies that address the four core academic areas: reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies. Students in the GT program demonstrated skills in self-directed learning, thinking, research, and communication. In Dallas ISD, students were nominated, screened, and selected by the campus G/T Selection Committee.

Program Implementation

The GT program in Dallas ISD consisted of three components: grades K-5, grades 6-8, and grades 9-12. The GT students in grades K-5 were served with a “pull out” program which met the needs of students who demonstrated complex thinking skills and need for academic challenge and rigor. The GT students were provided a minimum of two hours of classroom instruction per week, focused on critical thinking, problem solving, creative thinking, researching and developing innovative products. The GT students in secondary schools were served through a variety of advanced academic programs. The GT students in grades 6-8 could take advanced academic courses like Pre-Advanced Placement (AP), and the GT students in grades 9-12 could take Pre-AP, AP, and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses.

A student may be nominated by a teacher, counselor, administrator, parent, community member, peer, or a student can self-nominate. Test scores for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and ITBS/Logramos (now TerraNova/SUPERA) are also used to determine eligibility. Each campus has a ‘Selection Committee’ chaired by the GT teacher. The committees consist of at least four professional educators who received training in the nature and needs of GT students.

Methods

The goal of the 2015-16 GT program evaluation was to assess the GT program design, review implementation, and analyze student enrollment in GT courses. The evaluation included: (1) a full description of the GT program; (2) a description of number and percentage of GT students eligible to participate in the program and those actually participating; (3) an evaluation of the

Dallas ISD Scholars program; (4) an analysis of online surveys administered to all GT teachers at the end of professional development sessions; and, (5) an analysis of the extent to which GT students are reflective of the campus population.

Results

GT Demographics

The district data analysis indicated that there were 18,720 GT students in 2013-14, 20,001 GT students in 2014-15, and 20,728 GT students in 2015-16. Table 1 displays GT student demographic information. Overall, 99.6 percent of the eligible students participated in the GT program.

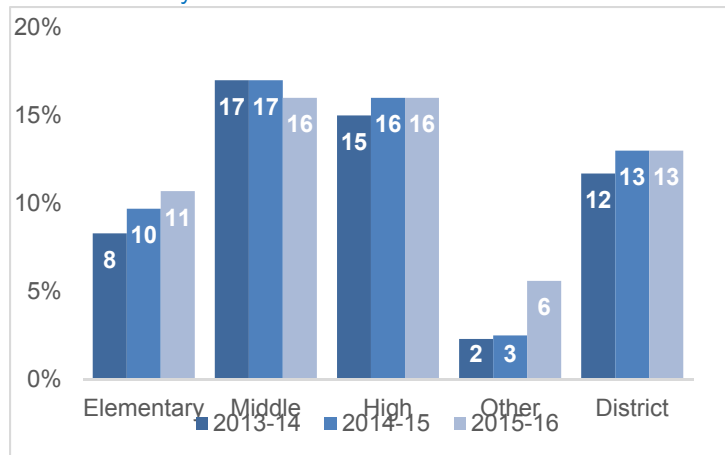
Table 1: Demographics of GT Students by Subgroups

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
	%	%	%
Ethnicity			
African American	18.1	17.3	16.4
Hispanic	70.8	71.5	72.4
White	8.0	8.2	8.4
Asian	1.9	1.9	1.9
American Indian	0.3	0.3	0.2
Native Hawaiian	0.2	0.2	0.1
Two or more races	0.7	0.7	0.7
Special Groups			
ELL*	26.3	29.9	31.4
Spec Ed.*	0.5	0.7	0.8
Low SES*	81.8	84.1	85.6

Note. * indicates an overlap occurs among subgroups.

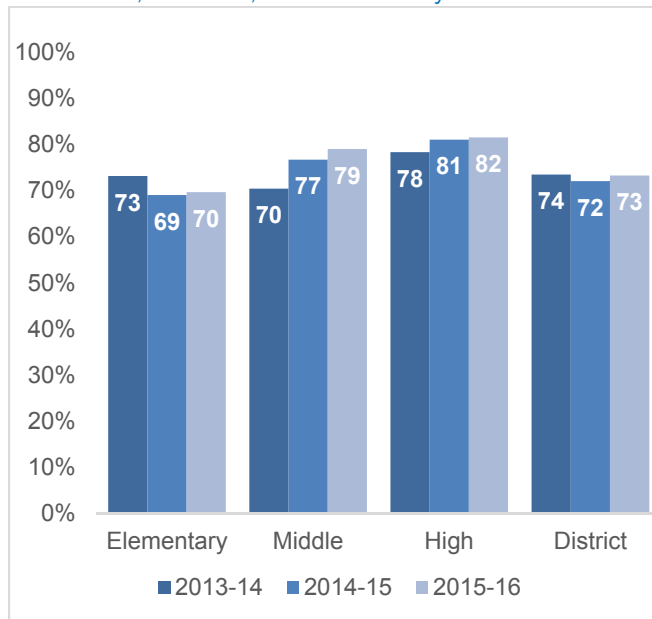
Across the district, the percentage of GT students increased slightly from 2013-14 through 2015-16 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Proportion of GT Students in 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 by School Level



The State House Bill 5 requires district to evaluate its school performance and mandates local accountability ratings for each campus. A school's GT population was expected to be reflective of the demographics of the student population as a whole. A campus with a minimum of 25 students in any ethnicity is included in the accountability rating. If the percentage of the students in a given ethnicity in a school mismatched its percentage of GT students by less than 10 percent, the school met the local accountability criterion. Figure 2 displays percentages of DISD schools that met GT accountability criteria from 2013-14 through 2015-16.

Figure 2: Proportion of Schools Met Accountability Criteria in 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 by School Level



GT Course Enrollment

Secondary school students could be enrolled in a variety of GT courses: middle school Pre-AP, high school Pre-AP, AP, and IB. Table 2 displays the number of students enrolled in those courses from 2013-14 through 2015-16. Students were only counted once within each course type. The total number of students enrolled increased yearly.

Table 2: Non-Duplicated GT Students' Course Enrollment in 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16

Course	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
MS Pre-AP	4,489	4,251	4,117
MS/HS Pre-AP	--	--	434
HS Pre-AP	3,905	4,176	4,205
HS AP	3,059	3,438	3,518
HS IB	62	29	36
Total	11,515	11,894	12,310

Dallas ISD Scholars program

The Dallas ISD Scholars program was a component of the GT program, and it recognized students in grades 7 through 10 who had demonstrated academic

excellence and college readiness potential. The DISD Scholars program supported students in their pursuit towards National Merit Scholarships and provided resources and opportunities for academic and social success. The DISD Scholars program consisted of a recognition ceremony, also called "pinning" ceremony, PSAT prep sessions, parent information sessions, and a district-wide competition. The program identified GT students who met the following criteria for participation in the Scholars Program:

- 7th graders – scored in the 95th percentile on 6th grade STAAR Reading or STAAR Math
- 8th graders – scored in the 95th percentile on 7th grade STAAR Reading or STAAR Math
- 9th graders – scored in the 95th percentile on 8th grade STAAR Reading or STAAR Math
- 10th graders - demonstrated a college readiness level on the PSAT

The DISD Scholars program had a Talent Identification Program called "Duke TIP" which searched for students in grade 7 with strong intellectual abilities. A parent information meeting was held in October 2015 at Townview Center with over 100 students/parents participating. The 40-minute presentation given by a Duke TIP professional described the program, provided participation eligibility criteria, described application procedures, and explained program benefits. There were 107 students enrolled in the Duke TIP program in 2016. Table 3 displays Duke TIP student participation information.

Table 3: Number of Duke TIP Participants in 2016

Category	N
Total enrolled	107
Tested	88
Qualified for State Recognition (ST)	23
Qualified for Grand Recognition (GR)	2
Qualified for Academy for Summer Studies (AC)	16
Qualified for Center for Summer Studies (CE)	11

The PSAT prep sessions were another part of the Dallas ISD Scholars program offered in the summer of 2015 for students entering the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades. During summer of 2015, the GT program offered two six-day sessions in four DISD high schools: L.G. Pinkston, Thomas Jefferson, Woodrow Wilson, and North Dallas. The instruction was presented by Princeton Review using PSAT Early Edge books. A total of 87 students attended the six-day sessions. Fifty students attended the first session held July 7-9 and July 14-16, and 37 participated in the second session held July 21-23 and July 28-30. At the end of the sessions, students completed a survey about their experience. The students' overall experiences were positive; 36 percent rated the session as "Good", 29 percent rated as "Very Good", and 17 percent rated as "Excellent".

The DISD Scholars Challenge, a district-wide competition, focused on students' problem solving skills and creativity. The competition was held in October 2015 at Smith New Tech high school. One hundred sixty-four students in grades 7 through 11 registered and 62 students participated in the competition. Students were divided into middle school and high school groups for two sessions: "Trash to Treasure: Housing of the Future" (creativity) and "The Marshmallow Challenge" (problem solving). Each session lasted one and a half hours, and was followed by an award presentation.

Dallas ISD Scholars Survey

The college and career readiness evaluation team designed an online scholar's survey in March 2016. The survey solicited information from the scholars in the current school year (2015-16) and new scholars in the coming school year (2016-17). The survey consisted of 48 items on four topics: the Pinning Ceremony, PSAT Summer Prep, the Scholar's Challenge, and the Scholar's Newsletter. The survey was administered to all scholars in grades 7 and 8 from March 22 to April 22, 2016.

There were 1,465 scholars for the 2015-16 school year districtwide. The 2016-17 scholars enrollment began in spring 2016. As the continuous enrollment goes on, the final number of 2016-17 scholars will not be available until December 2016. Of the currently enrolled 2016-17 scholars, only 38 participated in the survey. Of the 2015-16 scholars, only 29 responded to the survey.

Because the response rate was so low, a full summary of responses was provided to the GT program for review, but is not included in this report. Many of the items were only relevant if the student attended a particular event, reducing the sample size in each case; however, there were four items that solicited information about the scholars program overall. In general, 83 percent of the 2015-16 scholars responding to the survey reported that they felt like the scholar's program provided them opportunities to learn about college and career readiness options, 78 percent felt like they were a part of something bigger than themselves, 70 percent stated the program helped them better understand themselves, and 87 percent would recommend the scholar's program to other students. For the 2016-17 scholars, 92 percent of those who responded to the survey planned on going to a 4-year college or university, and 87 percent felt moderately or extremely prepared to accomplish their educational goals after high school.

Professional Development

The GT teachers were required to attend a one-time only, 30-clock hour training by the end of the first semester of 2015. An annual follow-up six-hour update of professional development was also required for GT teachers. Campus administrators and counselors were required to have six hours of GT training.

The Gifted and Talented program held the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) trainings in November 2015 and March 2016. A total of 48 teachers participated the trainings (Table 4).

Table 4: NMSI Training Teacher Attendance

Date	Subject	N
November 2015	Biology	2
	Chemistry	2
	Environmental Science	3
	Physics	3
	Statistics	3
	English	3
Total		16
March 2016	Biology	6
	Calculus	4
	Chemistry	6
	Environmental Science	2
	Physics	3
	Statistics	2
	English	9
Total		32

Participants were asked to complete a NMSI survey at the end of each session. Figures 3 and 4 display the ratings on the presenters and the session content.

Figure 3: The Ratings on Presenters and Overall Session

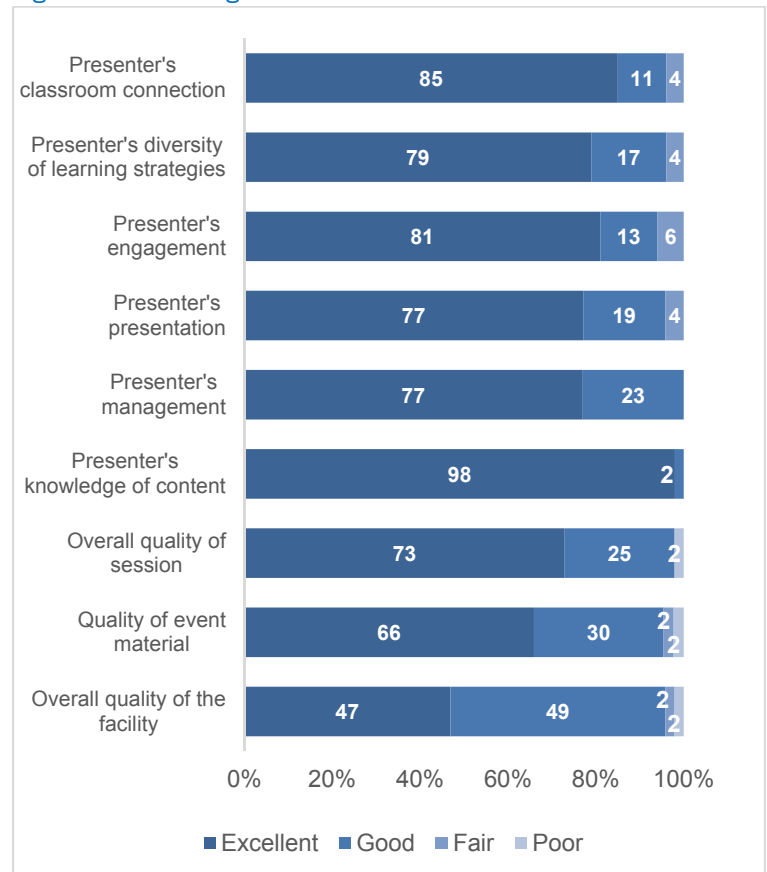
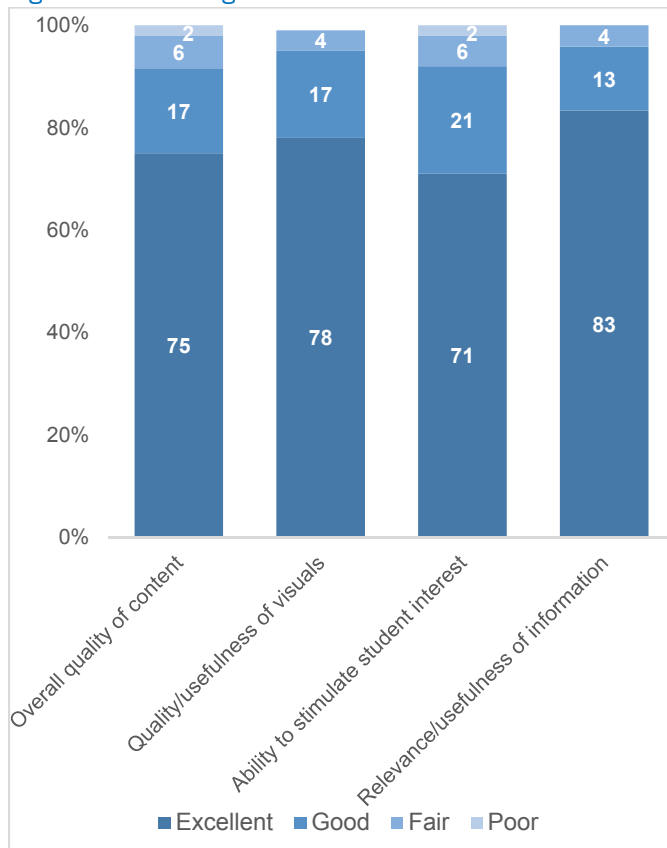


Figure 4: The Ratings on Session Content

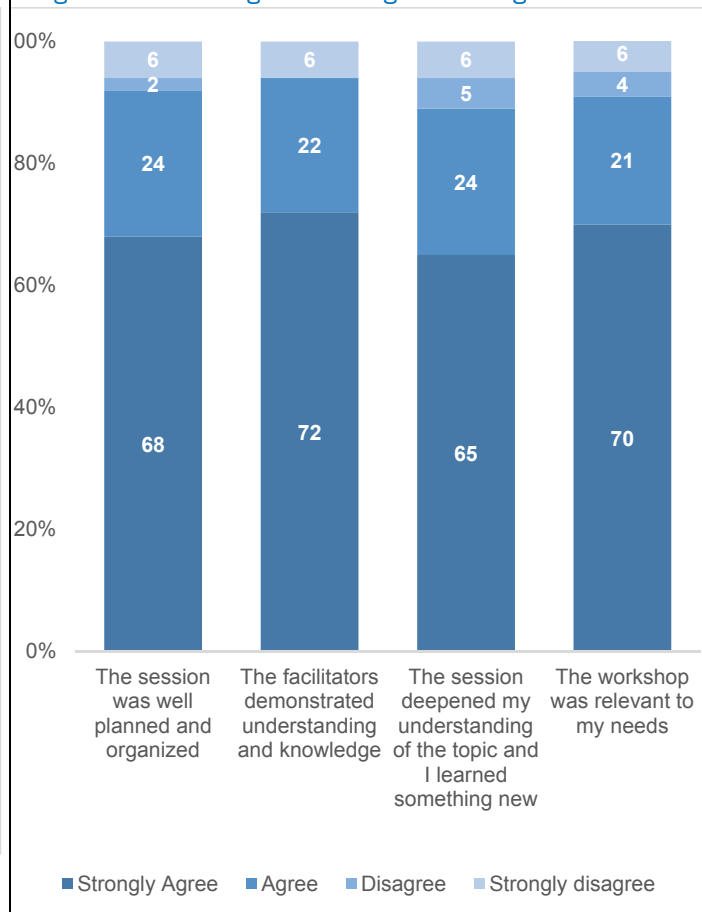


Note. Percentage may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

The majority of participants rated the overall quality of the event as “Excellent” (65%) or “Good” (31%). Ninety-six percent of the participants indicated that the techniques and the content learned helped them improve the way they plan instruction, and they would like to take another event like this one.

In addition, the GT department held Teaching & Learning (T&L) professional development training from January through April 2016. Forty-eight elementary, 15 middle, and 20 high school teachers or instructional coaches participated the sessions. Figure 5 displays the ratings of the T&L sessions.

Figure 5: The Rating of Teaching & Learning Session



Note. Percentage may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

The majority of the respondents rated the session as “3” or “4” on a scale of 1-5, and 95 percent of them stated that they would recommend this session to other teachers.

Recommendations

The Dallas ISD Gifted and Talented program was being implemented with fidelity and meeting program goals. The program should continue its efforts while exploring methods to better track student participation in GT events.

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