

2016-17 Evaluation of the African American Success Initiative

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At-a-Glance

The African American Success Initiative (AASI) is the Dallas Independent School District's (Dallas ISD) strategic initiative aimed at closing the achievement gap and increasing access to academic opportunities for African American students. AASI concentrated on four specific areas for the 2016-17 school year: 1) professional development; 2) academic achievement for K-3 students; 3) student advocacy; and 4) parent, family, and community engagement. AASI received \$750,000 in Title I funding to support 13 schools in the Carter and Wilmer Hutchins feeder patterns while increasing the reach of professional development programs to feeder patterns with more than 40 percent African American student population.

Purpose and Methods of the Evaluation

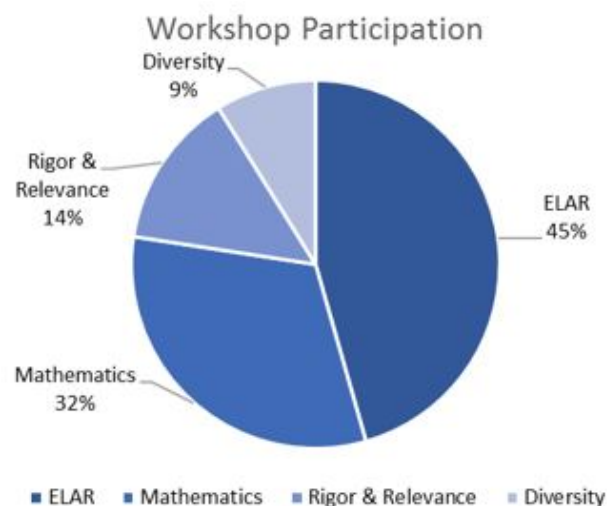
The purpose of this evaluation was to evaluate the extent to which AASI was implemented with fidelity, met expected outcomes as outlined in program documents, and impacted achievement of African American students. Data were collected and provided by AASI and included records of workshops, mentoring activities, and events conducted.

What were the Professional Development opportunities provided by AASI?

The African American Success Initiative (AASI) placed an emphasis on expanding professional development offerings to educators in AASI schools and feeder patterns with a high concentration of African American students to increase academic achievement and provide cultural diversity training. AASI engaged the services of Neuhaus Education, Trice Education, Dianna Masters, and Sharroky Hollie to provide professional development opportunities

Approximately 735 teachers and campus staff attended AASI professional development opportunities across 57 workshops. Enrollment was open to the teachers and staff of the targeted feeder patterns. AASI incentivized participation by offering professional development credits, or a stipend if a teacher already had fulfilled their PD hours. Professional development workshops on English Language Arts / Reading (ELAR) topics showed the most participation (45%), followed by Mathematics (32%) (Figure1).

Figure 1: 2016-17 AASI Workshop Participation



Was the implementation of the Neuhaus supplemental curriculum successful?

To improve the reading readiness of K-3 students, AASI, in cooperation with the Neuhaus Education Center, introduced a mandatory supplemental reading curriculum. Teachers in the 14 participating elementary (9 AASI elementary schools and 5 elementary schools with a high percentage of African American students) schools were required to implement 30 minutes of structured lessons at least three times a week in addition to the regular reading curriculum.

During the 2016-17 school year, 1,747 students in grades K to three used the Neuhaus supplemental reading program during their reading or language arts classes. This included 1,407 African American students which was 9.8 percent of all African American students (K-3) in the district.

Training on the Neuhaus curriculum occurred via a two-day professional development workshop during the summer PD sessions offered by AASI. Of the 76 teachers that implemented the Neuhaus curriculum in AASI, 62 teachers (82%) participated in both training days, while seven teachers (9%) participated in one of two training days. Seven teachers (9%) who implemented Neuhaus did not participate in the training.

Teachers responding to the evaluator's survey noted they implemented the Neuhaus program an average of four days a week and for an average of 31 minutes per session.

What were the achievement outcomes of Neuhaus students?

Academic achievement results for K-3 Neuhaus students was analyzed using *ISIP*, *TerraNova* and *STAAR* reading. Results are limited because no dosage information was available regarding the implementation of Neuhaus and other supplemental reading programs. In general, student achievement on *TerraNova* and *STAAR* decreased as grade level increased. Less than half (49%) of Neuhaus third graders met the grade level standard on *STAAR*, and the percentage of students on grade level for *TerraNova* decreased from KN (79%) to first grade (59%) to second grade (55%).

The percentage of students that met the grade level passing standards by grade for Neuhaus African American students was compared to all district African American students and the district as a whole. In general, most students met the grade-level standard in kindergarten; however, the passing rate for all district African American students (75.6%) was lower than for Neuhaus African American students (79.4%) and all district students (78.4%). The percentage of students that met the passing standard was slightly higher for Neuhaus students than for all district African American students in kindergarten, grade two, and grade three; however, for grade two, the African American district percentage was slightly higher than the Neuhaus African American percentage.

Even though slightly more Neuhaus African American students (79.4%) scored at grade level than all district students (78.4%) in kindergarten, the results were opposite for the remaining grade levels and showed a widening gap between district students and African American students (both African American Neuhaus and district African American students) as grade level increased. The gap between the African American Neuhaus students and all district students increased from 7.2 percentage points in grade one to 14 percentage points in grade three. At grade three, less than half of Neuhaus African American students (49%) or district African American students (47.9%) met the *STAAR* passing standard; the district average was 62.3 percent. These results show the need for strengthening the AASI academic component.

Results were similar for *ISIP* as less than half of K-2 Neuhaus students (44%) met the Tier 1 grade-level standard at the end of the year. The average passing rate for all African American district students was 42 percent, while the average for all district students was 57 percent.

What were the perceptions of the Neuhaus Program?

Teachers, Campus Instructional Coaches (CICs), and principals were asked to rate the quality and relevance

of the Neuhaus Curriculum. The majority of the respondents indicated (agreed and strongly agreed) that the Neuhaus program provided a logical framework to follow and that the scripts were easy to implement. However, most respondents indicated that they believed teachers did not have enough manipulatives to implement all student activities. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers felt that the Neuhaus curriculum fit well within the Dallas ISD's Reading / ELAR lesson structure, which showed that a sizable percentage (42%) did not agree. Most (73%) of the CICs indicated that the teachers found Neuhaus worthwhile to implement, while eighty-two percent of principals were interested in continuing with the implementation of the Neuhaus program for the 2017-18 school year. District results for African American students also showed that a sizable percentage of K-3 students were not performing at grade level.

What direct student components did AASI implement?

During the 2016-17 school year, AASI maintained two direct student (mentoring) components in the form of TutorMate and Tier III Student Advocacy Program.

TutorMate

TutorMate provided 112 first grade elementary students across five elementary schools the opportunity to remotely connect with a volunteer from one of TutorMate's corporate partner organizations. Tutoring sessions lasted an average of 30 minutes and were conducted via screen share. Reading materials were individualized by TutorMate based on the reported reading level.

Analysis of the provided information indicated that students received an average of 4.7 hours of tutoring time over a seven-month time span and averaged an increase of 2.6 reading stages. The *TerraNova* passing rate for TutorMate participants was 64 percent while that of the remaining school population was 61 percent. Despite the higher passing rate of TutorMate participants, an independent-samples t-test indicated that the difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, it could be concluded that TutorMate participants did not show a significant increase in achievement over the general student population.

Tier III Student Advocacy Program

AASI's Tier III Student Advocacy Program was designed to mentor a total of 60 Tier III students for the 2016-17 school year. The aim was to connect students who had a high number of course failures, disciplinary referrals, and absences with appropriate resources to improve their attendance, academic performance, and social interaction rates. The four Dallas ISD schools selected for the Tier III Program were Atwell MS,

Kennedy-Curry MS, Carter HS, and Wilmer-Hutchins HS. The initiative was led by two Student Advocate Coordinators. Principals, in cooperation with AASI staff, selected students fitting the noted criteria. Analysis of the submitted student records indicated that student selection was inconsistent across schools and selection criteria changed during the school year. Results indicated that the Tier III student advocacy program did not meet the goal of actively mentoring 60 Tier III students due to students joining and leaving the program throughout the school year. There were no statistically significant differences between the EOY Tier III students and the matched comparison group for any of the indicators assessed. Due to the small number of students in the two groups, results should be viewed with caution.

Student Activities

AASI scheduled and conducted 18 educational activities during the 2016-17 school year to support the AASI key components of 1) Academic Achievement and College Readiness, 2) Cultural Diversity and Community Engagement, 3) Social and Emotional Learning, and 4) Student Advocacy. Activities were intended to promote comradery among the participants and to offer insight into cultural and educational opportunities. Participation in AASI events ranged from three students to over 1,000 students. The evaluator could not ascertain how many unique students AASI reached, due to the lack of student identification information.

What community engagement opportunities were provided as part of AASI?

The Dallas ISD Office of Family and Community Engagement organized and spearheaded a family workshop series under the name "Parents Matter Too!" for AASI parents, and community members in the Wilmer-Hutchins and the David W. Carter Feeder Patterns. A total of 210 attendees participated in the six workshops.

Summary and Recommendations

The evaluation suggests that AASI was not a cohesive program but instead was a collection of activities and professional development opportunities offered to participating schools. Implementation varied across schools and all schools participated in a variety of other programs and activities that may have affected student outcomes. Outcomes addressed in this evaluation cannot be directly attributable to AASI activities but reflect general results at participating schools.

- **Design a more cohesive African American Success Initiative.** During the 2016-17 school year, AASI was not a cohesive program but a

collection of activities and professional development opportunities offered to participating schools. Although this catalog approach may be preferable to individual stakeholders, it makes it impossible to implement a program in which all of its parts work together in unity.

- **Strengthen the academic component of AASI, especially in early grades.** Results of K-2 EOY *ISIP* analysis revealed that less than half (44%) of Neuhaus students were reading on grade level at the end of the 2016-17 school year. Similarly, student achievement on *TerraNova* and *STAAR* decreased as grade level increased. Less than half (49%) of third graders met the grade level standard on *STAAR*, and the percentage of students on grade level for *TerraNova* decreased from KN (79%) to first grade (59%) to second grade (55%).
- **Ensure consistent data collection across all AASI components.** Due to unavailable data and/or data entered inconsistently across campuses and vendors, some AASI components could not be evaluated.
- **Direct student intervention should be broadened beyond Tier III students.** Although Tier III students definitely need and deserve help from Dallas ISD, it is the mission of AASI to close the wide academic achievement gap between African American and other district students. To show a broad improvement it would be wise to work with a student population that is less mobile and more amenable to accepting academic help. Tier III students of all ethnicities should receive district resources; however, targeted Tier II students could benefit as well.
- **Expand community and parent outreach programs to further increase the participation of parents in their children's education, and to raise community awareness.** Consider expanding AASI's partnership with the Office of Family and Community Engagement to provide specific workshops to parents based on the 2016-17 feedback.

The full 2016-17 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

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