

2016-17 Evaluation of Special Education Program

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At-a-Glance

Special education provides services and supports designed to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) requires districts to monitor test performance, participation, graduation rates, along with other non-academic indicators through the Performance Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS). The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the characteristics, academic performances, and outcomes of students who received special education services during the 2016-17 school year (SY).

What were the characteristics of students served in special education?

The special education population for the district was 12,154 as of October 31, 2016 and represented 7.7 percent of the district population. This was a slight increase in enrollment from last year (11,824). Over the last eight years, enrollment in special education has remained relatively consistent between years. African Americans have historically been overrepresented in district special education enrollment as indicated by positive difference rates (Table 1). This rate has been steadily decreasing over the past eight years. Conversely, Hispanic students have historically been underrepresented in special education enrollment although this rate has been decreasing. English Language Learners (ELLs) have also been underrepresented in special education enrollment but the rates of underrepresentation have been increasing.

Table 1: Disproportionality Difference Rates in Special Education: SY 2009-10 to SY 2016-17

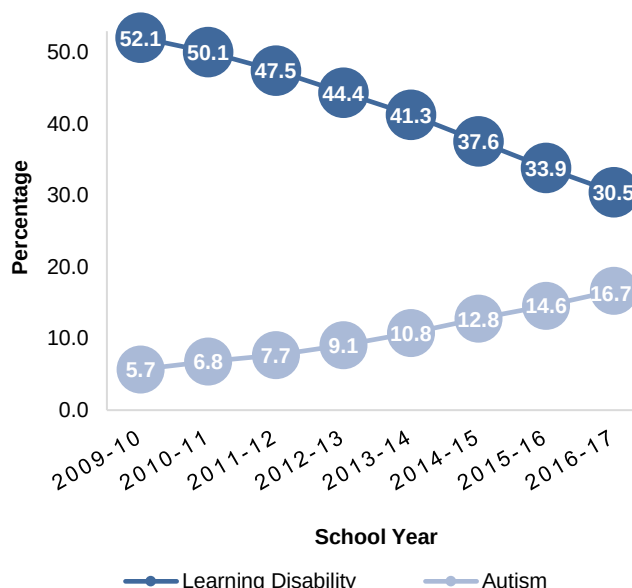
SY	African American	Hispanic	ELL
2009-10	12.5	-13.9	-4.2
2010-11	12.3	-13.0	-5.5
2011-12	12.1	-12.3	-6.2
2012-13	11.2	-11.3	-5.4
2013-14	10.7	-11.0	-6.1
2014-15	10.7	-10.7	-7.7
2015-16	10.3	-9.7	-8.6
2016-17*	9.2	-8.6	-9.0

Source: Difference rates extracted from PBMAS reports 2010-2016. *This is an estimated projection as the 2017 PBMAS Report was not available at the time of this report.

The most commonly reported primary disabilities of students enrolled in special education during the 2016-17 school year were learning disability (30.5%), autism (16.7%), other health impairment (15.0%), speech impairment (14.2%), and intellectual disability

(14.0%). The top two primary disabilities of students enrolled in special education were compared between the 2009-10 school year and the 2016-17 school year to identify any trends. The percentage of students identified to have autism nearly tripled from 5.7 percent in the 2009-10 school year to 16.7 percent in the 2016-17 school year. At the same time, the percentage of students identified as having a learning disability has declined from half (52.1%) of all special education students in the 2009-10 school year to less than one-third (30.5%) of all special education students in the 2016-17 school year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of Special Education Students by Primary Disability and School Year: SY 2009-10 to SY 2016-17



What were the academic performances of students served in special education?

There were two versions of the *State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* 3-8 exam available to special education students (*STAAR* and *STAAR Alt 2*) and three versions of *STAAR EOC* exams (*STAAR*, *STAAR A*, and *STAAR Alt 2*). *STAAR* was the most commonly tested version of the assessment for special education students. The least commonly tested version was *STAAR Alt 2*. Students who were tested with the *STAAR* version outperformed students who took the *STAAR A* version; students tested with *STAAR Alt 2* demonstrated the best performance. Special education ELL students

performed at a lower level of achievement on STAAR exams than non-ELL special education students.

As shown in Table 2, the percentage of special education students who reached the satisfactory level increased modestly on every subject of STAAR 3-8 exams. Progress on STAAR EOC exams were mixed. Students improved the most on the STAAR 3-8 mathematics, social studies and Algebra EOC exams (7.0, 5.5, and 5.6 percentage points). Student performance decreased on the STAAR English I, English II, and U.S. History EOCs (-3.8, -3.9, and -0.1 percentage points).

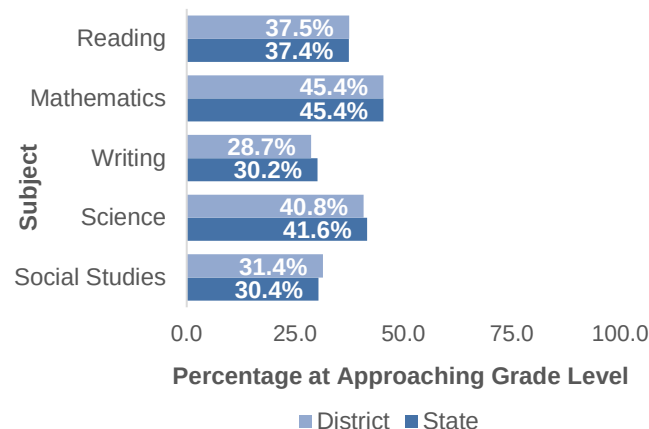
Table 2: Percentage of Special Education Students at the Approaching Grade Level Standard: SY 2015-16 and SY 2016-17

Subject	2015-16	2016-17	Change
STAAR 3-8			
Reading	33.9	37.4	3.5
Mathematics	38.4	45.4	7.0
Writing	27.7	28.6	0.9
Science	36.3	40.8	4.5
Social Studies	25.9	31.4	5.5
STAAR EOC			
Algebra	37.8	43.4	5.6
English I	22.0	18.2	-3.8
English II	24.9	21.0	-3.9
Biology	46.8	47.3	0.5
U.S. History	57.8	57.7	-0.1

Note: Data reflect all versions of STAAR combined including first-time tested through second administration.

The performances of Dallas ISD special education students on STAAR 3-8 exams were compared to special education students at the State level in Figure 2. District and State special education performances were very similar.

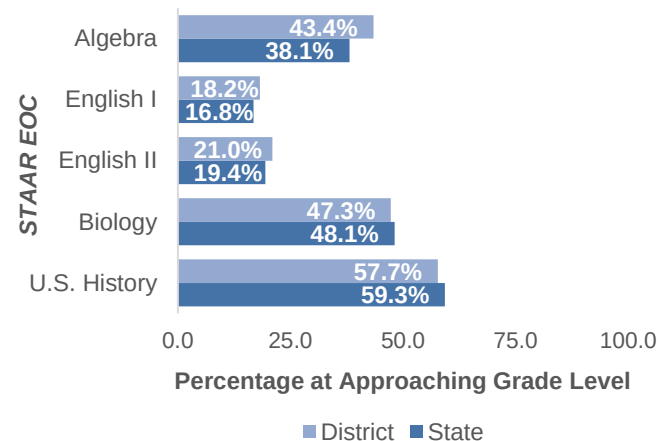
Figure 2: Percentage of Special Education Students at the Satisfactory Level on STAAR 3-8 exams: SY 2016-17



Note: Data reflects all versions of STAAR 3-8 exams combined through the second administration.

The performances of Dallas ISD special education students on STAAR EOC exams were also compared to State special education students in Figure 3. Special education students in the district outperformed State students on Algebra, English I, and English II EOC exams. A higher percentage of State special education students reached the satisfactory level on Biology and U.S. History EOCs. The performances of district and State special education students were similar.

Figure 3: Percentage of Special Education Students at the Satisfactory Level on STAAR EOC exams: SY 2016-17



Note: Data reflects all versions of STAAR 3-8 exams combined through the second administration.

Recommendations

- Review pre-referral and initial assessment processes regarding the placement of ELL students into special education services.
- Ensure schools are properly resourced for students with autism.
- Consider the development and deployment of a new communication and response system to provide timely, responsive information and feedback to and from schools.

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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