

# 2017-18 Evaluation of Dallas ISD Early Learning

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## At-a-Glance

The goals of the Early Learning department were to improve kindergarten (K) readiness and to ensure that all students were reading on grade level by the end of grade two. The budget for the department in 2017-18 was \$10,824,300. The purpose of this report was to summarize the 2017-18 context, process, and outcomes of the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Early Learning department initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Contextual information about the services provided to children from birth through grade two was gathered through review of internal documents and interviews with Early Learning department central staff members. Process information was examined through analyses of *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS) data. The evaluation also included analyses of K readiness and student academic achievement data through grade three.

### Context of the Early Learning Initiatives

The first goal of the Early Learning department was increasing K readiness through the provision of education services to children from birth to age five through the expansion of the prekindergarten (PK) program. The second was to ensure that all students were reading on grade level by the end of grade two. To reach these goals, Early Learning staff members endeavored to increase demand for and access to PK, extend the continuum of care through community resources to support children from birth, increase classroom quality, and support reading and language acquisition in K and beyond.

To increase access and demand, the district continued to add facilities and partner sites. An early childhood center opened at Arlington Park Elementary in January 2018 (to begin serving students during the 2018-19 school year) and the number of PK partnerships increased (from 21 in 2016-17 to 27 in 2017-18).<sup>2</sup> In addition, an application to add more sites for 2018-19 was released in January 2018. Early Learning staff members fostered community partnerships with Commit!<sup>3</sup> and PK partnership sites. To expand the continuum of care, students from birth to five could also receive services through the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)<sup>4</sup> program and AVANCE.<sup>5</sup>

To improve classroom quality, the Early Learning department continued using PK specialists and continued adding K-2 specialists into some K through grade-two classrooms. Specialists provided individual support for teachers. The district employed 42 PK specialists and 46 K-2 specialists; of these, 13 were lead specialists<sup>6</sup> who provided individualized tiered support to 16-22 teachers each. First, specialists participated in professional development (PD) programs including Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage training, CLASS observer training, Jim Knight's coaching training, MyTeachstone training, and content related training. Then, specialists provided teachers with training including Making the Most of Classroom Interactions training (K-2 only), and Just in Time training (PK only). Department staff also provided summer PD for PK-2 teachers through the district summer Personalized Professional Learning and Development (P2LD) program. Lastly, the Early Learning department provided training for teachers in third-party childcare settings and for teaching assistants.

Another attempt to increase quality was a focus on assessing student-teacher interactions. The CLASS,<sup>7</sup> an observation instrument, was administered by Southern Methodist University (SMU) to measure the quality of teacher-student interactions with students.

Finally, to ensure that students were reading on grade level, there was an increased focus on reading and language acquisition. The district used PD and specialist coaching to ensure that teachers were equipped to teach reading. The district also began working on a K-12 literacy curriculum to further support students in reading.

### Characteristics of Early Learning Students

In 2017-18, 47,122 students enrolled in early childhood (EC) education through grade two. Over half of the students were male (51%), Hispanic (68%), and/or economically disadvantaged (82%). English Language Learners made up 50 percent of students. Sixty-seven percent of students who attended Dallas ISD PK in 2016-17 returned to Dallas ISD for K in 2017-18, which means that about a third of 2016-17 PK students did not remain in the district in 2017-18. Fifty percent of

<sup>1</sup> Detailed methodologies are available in the full report.

<sup>2</sup> As of December 2017. Students in partnerships were taught by Dallas ISD teachers.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see <http://commit2dallas.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see Hinkley (2018).

<sup>5</sup> For more information, see <https://avance-dallas.org/> or Hinkley (2018).

<sup>6</sup> As of June 2018.

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see <http://teachstone.com/classroom-assessment-scoring-system/>.

2017-18 grade-three students were continuously enrolled since 2013-14 (their K year).

### Grade-Level Retention and Special Education Enrollment Rates

Students who attended Dallas ISD PK (*DISD PK*) were retained at lower rates than those who did not attend Dallas ISD PK (*No DISD PK*).<sup>8</sup> Between the 2015-16 and 2017-18 school years, 1.8 to 4.5 percent of the *No DISD PK* group was retained compared to 0.7 to 2.2 percent of the *DISD PK* group. In addition, *DISD PK* students were enrolled in special education at lower rates (5.0% to 7.5%) than *No DISD PK* students (7.1% to 12.4%) with the exception of the K year (4.1% vs 3.6%).

### Early Learning Teacher Retention Rates

A sizeable proportion of 2015-16 and 2016-17 Early Learning teachers were reassigned to non-Early Learning positions or left the district. Of the 2015-16 Early Learning teachers, 73 percent continued to teach in an Early Learning grade in 2016-17; however, almost half (47%) were no longer teaching an Early Learning grade after two years (in 2017-18). The Early Learning teacher retention rate was even lower for 2016-17 Early Learning teachers with 66 percent still teaching an Early Learning grade in 2017-18. This means the district has provided professional development and extended support to many Early Learning teachers who have been moved to non-Early Learning positions in the district or who have left Dallas ISD.

### PK Through Grade-Two Classroom Quality

As in the last two years, results of *CLASS* indicated that district teachers were strongest in emotional support and weakest in instructional support. While more than 85 percent of teachers met the quality thresholds for emotional support and classroom organization, at most 56 percent of teachers met the quality threshold for instructional support. Fifty-four (fall) and 50 (spring) percent of teachers met or exceeded the quality threshold in all three domains. The district average was above the quality threshold for both semesters in the emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support domains. All three domains and overall scores slightly decreased from fall to spring. However, none of these changes were statistically significant.

Compared to spring 2017, an increased percentage of teachers met or exceeded the quality threshold overall and for the instructional support domain in spring 2018.

However, the percentage of teachers who met or exceeded quality thresholds in spring 2017 was slightly higher than in spring 2018 for the emotional support and classroom organization domains.

### Student Outcomes on *ISIP*

More students that tested in Spanish than in English on *Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)* performed at or above grade level (the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile) in reading with the exception of grade-two EOY. For the English and Spanish administrations combined, the overall percentage of students at or above grade level in 2017-18 ranged from 47 percent to 57 percent (50% to 57% for PK, 51% to 55% for K, 47% to 56% for grade one, and 54% to 56% for grade two). Percentages were slightly lower in 2017-18 than in 2016-17.

In 2017-18, the percentage of students performing at or above grade level on *ISIP* increased slightly from the beginning to the middle to the end of the year (BOY, MOY, and EOY, respectively) in K, grade one, and grade two. The percentage of PK students at or above grade level dropped from BOY to MOY and then increased from MOY to EOY. When compared to 2016-17, the percentages of students at or above grade level were slightly lower in 2017-18 across *ISIP* administrations (BOY, MOY, and EOY) with one exception (EOY for PK; Table 1).

**Table 1: 2017-18 Percentage of Students in Grades PK through Two Performing At or Above Grade Level on *ISIP* by Year**

|         | BOY     |         | MOY     |         | EOY     |         |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|         | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 | 2016-17 | 2017-18 |
| Grade   | %       | %       | %       | %       | %       | %       |
| PK      | 57      | 51      | 54      | 50      | 55      | 57      |
| K       | 55      | 51      | 55      | 53      | 57      | 55      |
| Grade 1 | 52      | 47      | 54      | 50      | 58      | 56      |
| Grade 2 | 56      | 54      | 56      | 55      | 57      | 56      |

**Source:** PEIMS district database: 10/31/16 and 10/30/17. *ISIP*: 10/18/16 (2016-17 BOY), 02/16/17 (2016-17 MOY), 05/30/17 (2016-17 EOY), 11/01/17 (2017-18 BOY), 02/05/18 (2017-18 MOY), and 06/03/18 (2017-18 EOY).

**Note:** PK=Prekindergarten. Grade Level=40<sup>th</sup> percentile. *ISIP*=*Istation's Indicators of Progress*. K=Kindergarten. BOY=beginning of year. MOY=middle of year. EOY=end of year. If a student completed the assessment in both languages, departmental guidelines were used to determine which assessment to include in the combined dataset. If a student took the test more than once, the latest score was used.

<sup>8</sup> To allow for accurate comparison between *DISD PK* and *No DISD PK* groups, only those K students who met the PK eligibility requirements were included in this sample.

## Differences in Achievement by PK Enrollment Status

Comparisons between *DISD PK* and *No DISD PK* groups on *ISIP*, *TerraNova*, and *SUPERA* showed that students who attended district PK were more likely to be performing at or above grade level (the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile) in reading and mathematics than those who did not attend district PK. On *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* reading and mathematics, students who attended district PK were more likely to attain Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) or Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+) than those who did not attend district PK (Table 2).

**Table 2: 2017-18 Percentage of Students At or Above Grade Level, Approaches+, or Meets+ on Assessments by Cohort and PK Enrollment Status**

| Assessment (n)                               | DISD PK % | No DISD PK % |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| <b>K data for 2017-18 K Cohort</b>           |           |              |
| <i>ISIP</i> (n=8,125)                        | 57        | 44           |
| <i>TerraNova Math</i> (n=8,661)              | 62        | 51           |
| <i>TerraNova Reading</i> (n=3,823)           | 81        | 73           |
| <i>SUPERA</i> (n=4,872)                      | 87        | 78           |
| <b>Grade One Data for 2016-17 K Cohort</b>   |           |              |
| <i>ISIP</i> (n=7,613)                        | 59        | 48           |
| <i>TerraNova Math</i> (n=7,793)              | 58        | 48           |
| <i>TerraNova Reading</i> (n=3,201)           | 63        | 58           |
| <i>SUPERA</i> (n=4,592)                      | 88        | 82           |
| <b>Grade Two Data for 2015-16 K Cohort</b>   |           |              |
| <i>ISIP</i> (n=7,022)                        | 57        | 54           |
| <i>TerraNova Math</i> (n=7,350)              | 63        | 56           |
| <i>TerraNova Reading</i> (n=3,049)           | 60        | 56           |
| <i>SUPERA</i> (n=4,316)                      | 48        | 45           |
| <b>Grade Three Data for 2014-15 K Cohort</b> |           |              |
| <i>STAAR Math App.+</i> (n=7,628)            | 80        | 73           |
| <i>STAAR Math Meets+</i> (n=7,482)           | 47        | 38           |
| <i>STAAR Reading App.+</i> (n=7,635)         | 76        | 70           |
| <i>STAAR Reading Meets+</i> (n=7,489)        | 43        | 35           |

Source: PEIMS district database: 10/30/17; EOY *ISIP*: 06/03/18; *TerraNova*: 6/11/18; *SUPERA*: 6/11/18; *STAAR*: 6/20/17.

Note: PK=Prekindergarten. K=Kindergarten. *Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)* includes the English and Spanish combined End-of-Year data. PK=Prekindergarten. K=Kindergarten. *STAAR*=State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. For *ISIP*, *TerraNova*, and *SUPERA*, scores were considered at or above grade level if they were at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. For *STAAR*, scores were included if the scores were the first administration and Approaches Grade Level or Above (App.+) or Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+). Approaches+ results included Alternate 2. Alternate 2 tests scores are not assessed for the Meets+ performance standard, resulting in a difference in the number of students tested for Approaches+ and Meets+. Although all scores are included, some students' test scores may have been adversely affected by online testing issues.

## Kindergarten Readiness

Of the 10,091 K students who took BOY *ISIP* in 2017-18, 51 percent were K ready (scored at or above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile), which was a decrease from 2016-17 (55%). A higher percentage of *DISD PK* students (55%) were K ready than *No DISD PK* students (31%). Even so, most students who were not K ready in fall 2017 attended Dallas ISD PK (67%).

## Student Outcomes on TerraNova, SUPERA, and STAAR<sup>9</sup>

On the 2017-18 *TerraNova* mathematics exam, 62 percent of the K students performed at or above grade level, as did 56 percent in grade one, and 60 percent in grade two. In comparison to 2016-17, a slightly higher percentage of students performed at or above grade level in grades K through two in 2017-18.

On 2017-18 *STAAR* mathematics, 76 percent of grade-three students scored Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) and 42 percent scored Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+). In comparison to 2016-17, a higher percentage of grade-three students performed at Approaches+ and Meets+ in 2017-18.

On the 2017-18 *TerraNova* reading exam, 81 percent of the K students performed at or above grade level, as did 64 percent in grade one, and 61 percent in grade two. On 2017-18 *SUPERA*, 85 percent of the K students performed at or above grade level, as did 86 percent in grade one, and 46 percent in grade two. In 2016-17 and 2017-18, less than half of grade-two students performed at or above grade level on *SUPERA*. In comparison to 2016-17, a lower percentage of students performed at or above grade level on reading across grades in 2017-18 with the exception of K and grade two *TerraNova* reading.

On 2017-18 *STAAR* reading, 72 percent of grade-three students scored Approaches+ and 39 percent scored Meets+. In comparison to 2016-17, a higher percentage of grade-three students performed at Approaches+ and Meets+ in 2017-18.

## Student Outcomes by Cohort and Comparison Campuses

In 2017-18, comparison campus scores were significantly higher than cohort campus scores,<sup>10</sup> both statistically and practically<sup>11</sup> for all assessments, overall and across grades, with exceptions.

<sup>9</sup> The *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, and *STAAR* files were dated 6/11/18, 6/11/18, and 6/20/18, respectively. *STAAR* results included the first administration; Approaches+ included Alternate 2. Although all scores are included, some students' test scores may have been adversely affected by online testing issues.

<sup>10</sup> A list of cohort and comparison campuses is available in Appendix M of the full report.

<sup>11</sup> Cohen's *d* is a measure of effect size and is indicative of practical significance. A small effect size is .20, medium is .50, and large is .80 (Cohen, 1988).

## Recommendations

- **Continue efforts to retain Dallas ISD PK students in the district.** About a third of 2016-17 PK students did not remain in the district in 2017-18 for K. The district should continue having monthly interactions with PK families, walk-throughs of future classrooms, and other events to encourage families to remain in Dallas ISD.
- **Improve the retention of Early Learning teachers in Early Learning grades.** Many Early Learning teachers did not remain in Early Learning grades. Early Learning invests a great deal of training and specialist support in Early Learning teachers. The district should protect its investment by keeping trained Early Learning teachers in grades PK through two.
- **Continue to implement the Early Learning initiatives with a focus on language and literacy development.** The Early Learning department should continue its work increasing K readiness and ensuring students are reading on grade level by the end of grade two by following the district plan created in conjunction with Boston Consulting Group. In particular, the district should continue increasing K readiness by increasing access to and the quality of PK. A higher percentage of students who attended Dallas ISD PK were K ready than those who did not attend (55% versus 31%). Students who attended Dallas ISD PK also scored at or above grade level at a higher percentage on various reading and mathematics assessments over time than those who did not attend. Even so, a sizable percentage of students performed below grade level on various reading assessments [e.g., grade-two *TerraNova* (39%) and *SUPERA* (54%)]. To ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of grade two, it will be important to keep emphasizing early language and literacy development through the alignment of birth to five and K through grade-two efforts.
- **Continue to train teachers to provide more effective instructional support for students.** Overall, the district performed well on *CLASS*; however, more than 44 percent of teachers did not meet the quality threshold for instructional support. Thus, the department should continue efforts to improve these scores. This training could be accomplished using group PD sessions or individual coaching with specialists focusing on supporting students' cognitive and language development.

## References

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Hinkley, S. (2018). *Evaluation of the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) 2017-18*. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2017-18 report can be found at [www.dallasisd.org/Page/888](http://www.dallasisd.org/Page/888). For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at [evaluation@dallasisd.org](mailto:evaluation@dallasisd.org).

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