

2018-19 Evaluation of the Special Education for English Learners Program

Dianne Palladino, Ph.D., Rett Mickelson, B.S., Sarah Hinkley, Ph.D., & Sydney Voss, Ph.D.

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At-a-Glance¹

For students who require both English Learner (EL) and special education (SPED) services (ELSPED) in the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), the campus Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee and Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) must collaborate to ensure issues related to both the disability and English proficiency are carefully considered. An important focus for the district in 2018-19 was improving student identification and provision of services for ELSPED students. \$1,652,936 in Title I funds (an increase from \$1,629,000 in 2017-18) supported a boost in multi-departmental leadership and instructional specialists to support this effort at 21 targeted campuses and to work on enhancing the reading/language arts (R/LA) and social studies curricula for all learners.² The purpose of this evaluation was to describe district services for ELSPED students, report teacher and administrator perceptions, and summarize student characteristics and academic outcomes for ELSPED students.

What were the key aspects of ELSPED services in 2018-19?

Program Description

For the first full academic year in 2018-19, a collaboration among the Bilingual Education/English as a Second Language (BE/ESL), SPED, and R/LA departments provided intensified specialized support for teachers of ELSPED students. The purpose of this collaboration was to: 1) develop and support embedded K to 12 ELSPED differentiation for all learners in the general education curriculum; 2) facilitate collaboration among campus-based educators, administrators, parents, and appropriate ELSPED specialists; 3) assist campuses in planning and implementing services for ELSPED students at all grade levels; and 4) create and conduct professional development opportunities.

Title I funds supported one Manager of Special Education for English Learners and 18 ELSPED Instructional Specialists. Other leadership, funded by general operating funds, included the Director of Special Education for English Learners, the Director of Reading/Language Arts, and the Manager of

Reading/Language Arts. These leaders collaborated to develop a set six-unit R/LA (K to grade 10) and Social Studies (K to grade 5) curriculum for Dual Language (DL) and ESL classrooms and embedded differentiated support in the general education curriculum for all learners in all grades (DL, ESL, scaffolded for sheltered students, and ELSPED).

The 21 campuses targeted for extra ELSPED support this year were selected because 1) they enrolled high numbers of ELSPED students or 2) they showed high achievement gaps in 2018 *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* outcomes for ELSPED students when compared to students in general education or to students in special education who were not ELs.

Program leadership indicated several accomplishments for 2018-19, including 1) establishment of the multi-department collaboration to serve ELSPED students; 2) completion of curriculum development and modifications for R/LA and social studies; 3) facilitation of raised districtwide awareness of the services needed by ELSPED students; and 4) improved awareness of ELSPED students through a flag in classroom rosters.

Program leadership also identified several challenges they faced in 2018-19, including 1) continuing misperceptions at campuses that a) students can either receive EL or SPED services and b) students need to be in general education if the SPED teacher does not speak Spanish; 2) ensuring coordination and communication among stakeholders from different departments; 3) low teacher turnout to professional development about the new curriculum, 4) teacher adjustment to a set district curriculum after several years without one; and 5) ESL certification of SPED teachers.

ELSPED-related professional development for teachers and administrators was provided for ARD/LPAC processes ($N = 9$ sessions) and ELSPED instruction ($N = 30$ sessions), with median attendees per session ranging from 6 to 13 people.

¹ Portions of this report were adapted from Grimberg, 2018.

² The 21 campuses targeted for the full 2018-19 academic year included 10 campuses at the elementary school level (May, Blanton, Caillet, Gill, Maple Lawn, Seagoville, Truett,

Salazar, Seagoville North, and Bush), two campuses at the middle school level (Stockard and Seagoville), and nine at the high school level (Adams, Adamson, Jefferson, Samuell, Sunset, White, Wilson, Skyline, and Conrad).

What were stakeholder perceptions regarding ELSPED services and training?

A total of 778 (44%) teachers, 34 CICs (89%), and 52 administrators (57%) completed at least part of the ELSPED perception survey. Approximately 69 percent of teacher respondents, 71 percent of CIC respondents, and 79 percent of administrator respondents worked with ELSPED Instructional Specialists during 2018-19. Of these, 48 percent of teachers, 32 percent of CICs, and 70 percent of administrators highly rated the helpfulness of the support they received (very or extremely helpful) for instructing ELSPED students.

Respondents in all three roles who reported experience with the curricula, especially CICs, rated the extent of curriculum differentiation for ELSPED students at least slightly higher for R/LA than for social studies, but high differentiation ratings did not exceed 55 percent (range: 26 percent of CICs for social studies to 55 percent of teachers for R/LA), indicating that from 45 to 74 percent of those familiar with the new curricula did not highly rate ELSPED differentiation in the R/LA and social studies curricula.

Between 65 and 90 percent of respondents in all roles highly rated general education, BE/ESL, and special education teacher awareness that qualified students should receive both special education services and EL services. Generally, higher rates of administrators and CICs than teacher respondents highly rated teacher awareness, but respondents in all roles considered general education teachers to be the least likely to have at least moderate awareness of this policy, indicating a potential need for more training on the subject for general education teachers.

Generally, administrators rated both the priority and frequency of ARD/LPAC collaboration higher than CICs and teachers. A greater percentage of administrators (68%) than CICs (48%) and teachers (48%) indicated that ARD/LPAC collaboration was a high or essential priority at their campuses. A similar pattern emerged for ratings of collaboration frequency, with a higher percentage of administrators (72%) than CICs (52%) and teachers (45%) indicating that ARD/LPAC collaboration occurred frequently or very frequently on their campuses. Furthermore, a higher proportion of teachers (priority: 20%; frequency: 35%) and CICs (priority: 13%; frequency: 23%) than administrators (priority: 4%; frequency: 4%) reported they did not have enough knowledge to rate the priority or frequency of ARD/LPAC collaboration on their campuses, indicating

a need to improve teacher and CIC awareness of ARD/LPAC collaboration.

What were the 2018-19 ELSPED student characteristics?³

Results for all ELs, all SPED students, nonSPED ELs, and nonEL SPED students are provided, when appropriate, for comparison groups throughout these sections.

Out of the 69,419 ELs and 13,720 students requiring SPED services in the Dallas ISD, 5,111 (7% of ELs; 37% of SPED) were ELSPED in 2018-19, comprising over three percent of district students. Student characteristics for ELSPED students generally were more comparable to the classifications with SPED students than with ELs with respect to sex (mostly male), and more comparable to ELs than SPED students with respect to race/ethnicity (mostly Hispanic). Notably, over half of nonEL SPED students (51%) were African-American. A higher rate of ELSPED students than nonEL SPED and all SPED students were reported to have a learning disability or speech impairment, and a lower rate of ELSPED students than nonEL SPED and all SPED students were reported to have an intellectual disability, emotional disturbance, or other health impairment.

The number of students in each classification examined over the past two years remained relatively stable, except for classifications including SPED students. Not only did the number of overall SPED students increase by 16 percent over the past two years, but the number of ELSPED students increased by 21 percent in the same time period. These differences likely reflect increased awareness and focus on student identification and service provision for these students.

What were the assessment outcomes for ELSPED students?

The first academic outcome examined was the *Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)* for K to grade 12. The evaluators used frequency analyses to determine the percentage of students who 1) earned each English proficiency rating (beginning, intermediate, advanced, advanced high) and 2) progressed, stayed the same, or regressed at least one level among all composite ratings between 2018 and 2019. For the first time in 2019, the Texas Education Agency offered the holistically-graded⁴ *TELPAS Alternate (TELPAS-ALT)* assessment for ELs

³ Characteristics and trends were provided for students enrolled on the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) snapshot dates for each year. District PEIMS snapshot dates were October 28, 2016 (2016-17; file date October 31, 2016), October 27, 2017 (2017-18; file date

October 30, 2017), and October 26, 2018 (2018-19; file date February 26, 2019).

⁴ Holistically-graded assessments are based on the knowledge of a student's skills over a time period across all four domains, using observable behaviors aligned to the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS).

with the most significant cognitive disabilities who were unable to complete the *TELPAS*, even with accommodations. Frequency analyses were used to determine rates of students at each English proficiency level on *TELPAS-ALT* (awareness, imitation, early independence, developing independence, basic fluency).

The second academic outcome examined was *TerraNova* (*TN*; reading and mathematics) and *SUPERA* (*SUP*; reading). Frequency analyses were computed to determine the rates of K to grade two students scoring at or above grade level. The evaluators also calculated one- and two-year trends.

The third academic outcome examined was *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) and *End-of-Course* (*EOC*). The evaluators calculated rates at Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) and Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+) for 2019 (standard and *Alternate 2*) and for the previous two years (standard).

TELPAS

English proficiency ratings for ELSPED students at all grade levels tended to cluster in the intermediate level of English proficiency (range: 57% to 63%). From 60 to 69 percent of ELSPED students who took the *TELPAS* in 2018 and 2019 remained at the same proficiency level. Rates of ELSPED students who regressed increased as grade level increased (range: 16% to 26%). Progression rates were highest for ELSPED students in grades one to five (25%) but lower for ELSPED students in grades six to eight (11%) and grades nine to 12 (12%).

Overall, 512 ELs took *TELPAS-ALT* in 2019, with the highest percentage of students receiving the second highest level rating (26%; developing independence). Nineteen percent of students earned the highest proficiency rating (basic fluency) districtwide, with the lowest rates in grades two to five (11%) and the highest in grades six to eight (27%).

TerraNova/SUPERA

As shown in Table 1, rates of ELSPED and comparison groups scoring at or above grade level on the 2019 *TN* and *SUP* ranged from 29 percent (*SUP* reading, nonEL SPED) to 83 percent (*SUP* reading, nonSPED ELs). On *TN* reading and mathematics, rates of ELSPED students scoring at or above grade level were lower than for all comparison groups, and ELSPED rates tended to be closer to those for comparison groups that primarily included SPED students (nonEL SPED, all SPED) than those that primarily included students (nonSPED ELs, all ELs). This pattern was also true for ELs on *SUP* reading.

Table 1: 2018-19 Percentage of K to Grade Two ELSPED and Comparison Group Students At or Above Grade Level on *TerraNova* and *SUPERA*

Category	TN Reading		TN Mathematics		SUP Reading	
	Test	GL	Test	GL	Test	GL
	N	%	N	%	N	%
All nonEL	14,071	69.4	14,766	62.4	750	78.8
All EL	1,987	61.6	15,657	58.2	13,805	82.0
All SPED	1,158	42.8	1,808	36.9	656	52.7
nonSPED EL	1,725	65.6	14,764	59.6	13,166	83.4
nonEL SPED	852	45.5	867	38.4	14	28.6
ELSPED	262	35.1	893	35.8	639	53.2

Source: *TerraNova* and *SUPERA* district data files dated July 02, 2019. District PEIMS demographic file dated February 26, 2019. Note: K = Kindergarten. *TN* = *TerraNova*. *SUP* = *SUPERA*. EL = English learner. SPED = special education. ELSPED = dually-identified as English learner requiring special education services. GL = at or above grade level/40th percentile.

Two-year trends in rates of ELSPED students and comparison groups at or above grade level on *TN/SUP* were mixed and mostly divided by test language. Rates increased for *TN* reading and mathematics over two years for all groups but decreased for all groups on *SUP*. Rates increased the most (+7 percentage points) on both *TN* reading for nonSPED ELs (ELSPED two-year increases were at the middle of all groups examined) and on *TN* mathematics for ELSPEDs.

STAAR

STAAR results reviewed for ELSPED and comparison groups focused on Approaches+ rates as per the direction of department leadership. Rates of grade three to five ELSPED students at Approaches+ across subjects and grade levels were consistently among the lowest of all groups examined, ranging from 34 (writing) to 57 (mathematics) percent, and tended to be closer to rates for nonEL SPED students and all SPED students than for nonSPED ELs, all ELs, or all nonELs. Rates of grade six to eight ELSPED students on *STAAR* ranged from 26 percent (writing) to 49 percent (mathematics), and ELSPED rates followed the same patterns as grade three to five subtests when compared to comparison groups. Furthermore, Approaches+ rates for ELSPED students ranged from comparable to 13 percentage points lower than for nonEL SPED students, indicating a continuing need to improve supports for ELSPED students.

Rates of ELSPED students scoring at Approaches+ on *EOCs* were consistently among the lowest of groups examined, ranging from 16 (English II) to 59 percent (Algebra I), and tended to be closer to nonEL SPED students and all SPED students than to nonSPED ELs, all ELs, or all nonELs. In addition, ELSPED students scored at Approaches+ at rates five to 10 percentage points lower than nonEL SPED students, except for English I (2 percentage points lower), for which rates were more comparable, and Algebra I, for which

ELSPED rates exceeded those of nonEL SPED students by nine percentage points.

See Table 2 for a summary of *STAAR/EOC Approaches+* rates for ELSPED, all ELs, and all SPED students.

Table 2: 2018-19 Percentage of ELSPED, All EL, and All NonEL Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR and STAAR EOC

Grade	ELSPED		All EL		All SPED	
	Test N	App+ %	Test N	App+ %	Test N	App+ %
Grades Three to Five STAAR						
Mathematics 3-5	1,439	57.3	17,582	82.5	3,713	58.1
Reading 3-5	1,437	45.4	17,580	76.3	3,717	49.7
Writing 4	475	33.9	5,879	71.5	1,255	36.7
Science 5	505	43.0	5,970	69.0	1,281	47.9
Grades Six to Eight STAAR						
Mathematics 6-8	1,141	48.8	13,978	74.8	2,983	52.0
Reading 6-8	1,144	34.3	14,673	61.9	3,002	40.2
Writing 7	369	25.5	4,840	52.8	1,001	32.4
Science 8	326	44.8	4,932	79.6	865	50.8
Soc. Studies 8	324	31.2	4,565	53.8	856	41.4
STAAR EOCs						
Algebra I	476	59.0	5,197	82.5	1,203	55.2
English I	725	18.2	7,299	44.0	1,745	20.9
English II	521	16.3	5,443	40.9	1,356	24.2
Biology	463	48.4	4,634	77.2	1,128	53.2
US History	289	58.1	2,904	85.0	780	65.5

Source: District STAAR data files dated June 13, 2019 and STAAR EOC data files dated June 4, 2019. PEIMS snapshot demographic data file dated February 26, 2019.

Note: STAAR = State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness. EOC = End-of-Course. Rates include scores for first and second administrations of STAAR and December and May administrations of EOC for all versions of STAAR/EOC for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date of October 26, 2018. App+ = Approaches grade level or above performance standard. EL = English learner. SPED = requiring special education services. ELSPED = dually-identified as English learner and requiring special education services. US = United States. PEIMS = Public Education Information Management System.

Two-year trends at Approaches+ in grades three to five for ELSPED students and all comparison groups were flat or positive. ELSPED student two-year STAAR trends ranged from no change (science) to an increase of seven percentage points (mathematics). Notably, ELSPED student two-year growth was lowest among all comparison groups in all subjects but mathematics, the subject for which ELSPED two-year Approaches+ two-year increases were the highest.

Two-year trends at Approaches+ in grades six to eight for ELSPED students and all comparison groups were positive. ELSPED student two-year STAAR Approaches+ rates increased from seven (writing) to 15 percentage points (science). Notably, ELSPED students outperformed all comparison groups in two-year growth in mathematics (+15 percentage points), science (+15 percentage points), and reading (+8 percentage points).

Two-year trends on EOCs for ELSPED students and all comparison groups were relatively flat or positive, ranging from no change (biology) to an increase of 15 percentage points (Algebra I). Although two-year changes in rates at Approaches+ varied by EOC, trends for ELSPED students generally lagged at least half of comparison groups on most exams, with the lowest change rates of all comparison groups for Biology.

STAAR/EOC Alternate 2

In 2019, 14 to 17 percent of students who took STAAR subtests and five to eight percent of students who took EOCs were issued the *Alternate 2* version. Rates of students at Approaches+ on the *Alternate 2* version were higher than for the standard version on all tests, and generally hovered in the 90 to 100 percent range, except for the US History EOC, for which 82 percent of test takers achieved Approaches+.

How did STAAR/EOC Alternate 2 district outcomes compare to the state?

Differences in Dallas ISD and state performance for ELs on the STAAR and EOC *Alternate 2* were mixed. District rates differed more widely in both directions at the Masters level than at the Approaches+ level for most tests, ranging from 29 points below state rates (US History EOC) to 15 points above state rates (grade 8 reading).

Recommendations

See the Title III Evaluation of Bilingual Education and English as a Second Language At-A-Glance (EA19-126-4A) for a consolidated list of recommendations pertaining to English Learners.

References

Grimberg, N. (2018). 2017-18 Characteristics and Performances of Dually Identified Students. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 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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Dallas ISD
Department of Evaluation and Assessment
H. B. Bell School Support Service Center
2909 N. Buckner Blvd.
Box 10
Dallas, TX 75228