

2018-19 Evaluation of Summer Programs

C. Elizabeth Watson, M.P.A.

EA19-160-4

At-a-Glance

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) received federal funds for high-quality academic and enrichment summer programming for the 2018-19 school year through Title I, Part A, as authorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Dallas ISD summer programs were designed with varying purposes for a wide variety of students. The Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) Department supported several major programs during summer 2019.

ELO supported academic programs across the district, including the SSI¹/EOC/Readiness and Testing (SERT) program and the Credit-Recovery Program (CRP). The SSI and End Of Course components of SERT provided test preparation to elementary, middle and high school students, before the third administration of *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* and second administration of *STAAR EOC* in June. Additionally, the Readiness component of SERT provided remedial instruction for students who met retention criteria set by the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees. Students were considered for retention when they (1) did not master grade-level objectives, especially in language arts and mathematics, (2) had an overall report card average of 70 or above but received less than 70 in two or more core subjects, (3) had an overall report card average grade less than 70, or (4) failed at least two core courses. Participation in the program allowed these students the opportunity for on-time promotion to the next grade. The CRP allowed high school students to recover credits during the summer due to failure of the *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)*, failing course grades, or excessive absences during the school year. In addition to academic programming, ELO sponsored enrichment programming open to all elementary and middle school students, with a focus on the arts, science and technology, leadership development, and service learning. Also, in partnership with Thriving Minds, ELO hosted Thriving Minds Camps, which combined core instruction with arts enrichment for elementary students. Finally, in partnership with Frazier Revitalization, ELO hosted the Dunbar-Frazier Soaring Scholars Program at Paul L. Dunbar Learning Center, which offered technology-based literacy, mathematics, arts, culture, and physical education enrichment activities.

Methodology

The amount of funding allotted for each of the summer programs was obtained primarily from the Summer Learning workscope for Title I, Part A, and Title IV. The evaluator conducted descriptive and frequency analyses to determine student enrollment rates (students enrolled in the program versus those eligible), demographic characteristics, and English Learner (EL) status. Crosstab analyses were conducted to examine SERT promotion rates. The evaluator calculated the average grade received by students enrolled in each CRP course. Additionally, the evaluator used descriptive statistics to calculate course passing rates. The evaluator reviewed program documents and conducted interviews with program managers to obtain information on enrichment program context. Evaluators observed and completed an observation protocol for classrooms at selected campuses. Evaluators conducted student focus group interviews at selected programs. Surveys included items about student and parent perceptions of the program. Follow-up information was collected by phone and email.

Funding

The district allocated \$2,000,000 of Title I, Part A, funding to the Summer Learning programs in 2018-19. This amount was the same in 2017-18 (Mickelson, 2018). The largest amount was budgeted for Credit Recovery. Additionally, \$275,000 was funded through Title IV for the Dallas ISD Summer Enrichment programs, with additional enrichment funding provided through community partnerships.

Dallas ISD Summer Academic Programs

SERT

The ELO Department set student eligibility guidelines for determining which students should participate in SERT based on the retention criteria listed above. The ELO Department estimated the percentage of students at each campus who would qualify to attend SERT: 10 percent at elementary schools, 15 percent at middle schools, and 20 percent at high schools. If fewer than the predicted number of students met the criteria, other students, including pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students, were invited to fill available slots.

The SSI component of SERT offered test preparation for students in grade five and grade eight prior to the

¹ Student Success Initiative (SSI)

third administration of the STAAR reading and mathematics subtests. Students could attend SERT because they met local eligibility guidelines (failed courses) and/or because they did not meet the Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) standard on the STAAR. Likewise, the EOC component of SERT was open to high school students who had not met the Approaches+ standard on one or more STAAR EOC exams and provided test preparation in half-day sessions prior to retesting.

A total of 11,083 students in grades one through 12 attended at least one day of the SERT. Of this total, 9,688 (87.4%) were promoted to the next grade at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year; 1,358 students were retained (12.3%).

Credit Recovery Program

Ten comprehensive high school campuses (Bryan Adams, Pinkston, Seagoville², South Oak Cliff, Spruce, Sunset, North Dallas, Conrad, Madison, and Wilmer-Hutchins) offered the high school CRP, providing students with opportunities to recover up to one full credit (one-half credit per session). The program was half day from 1:00 – 4:00pm. Since high school students who needed to retake a STAAR EOC exam attended morning test preparation sessions through the SERT EOC program, students who needed to recover course credit attended afternoon sessions at the same home campuses. This format allowed students to attend the full day if they had both needs.

To earn course credit, students were expected to attend all eight instructional days and take an *Assessment of Course Performance (ACP)*. The final course grade was calculated as 85 percent coursework grade and 15 percent ACP score. The CRP sessions ran Monday through Thursday, in two eight-day instructional sessions, with Monday through Thursday of the following week scheduled for ACP testing. The first session lasted from June 10 to June 27; the second session lasted from July 8 to July 15.

A total of 2,375 students enrolled in 3,012 courses during the CRP. All courses which included 10 students or fewer (semesters one and two Advanced Quantitative Reasoning, and Student Leadership) had passing rates of 100 percent. For courses with more than 10 students, those taking Economics received the highest grade on average ($n = 23$, mean = 88.9). For courses with larger enrollment ($n > 50$), the highest average grade was for semester two U.S. History ($n = 75$, mean = 88.0). The course with the lowest passing

rate was semester one English I ($n = 223$ enrolled, 75.3% passing).

Dallas ISD Summer Enrichment Programs

Middle School Leadership Academy

The Middle School Leadership Academy was a full day (8:00am – 4:00pm) program for rising seventh and eighth graders focused on developing leadership skills and community responsibility through service learning. The program also included a complementary Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) component. The program was held over eight days from July 8 through July 18, 2019 at 11 district schools: W. H. Atwell Law Academy; the Leadership Academies at T. W. Browne, O. W. Holmes, S. Tasby, and E. B. Comstock; the Young Women's Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) Academy at Balch Springs; the Young Men's Leadership Academy at Florence; Boude Storey, Kennedy-Curry, H. W. Lang Sr., and Stockard Middle Schools. A total of 410 students attended the program.

The results of Leadership Academy classroom observations were generally positive. All negative ratings of the student engagement or teaching style items were attributable to a handful of classrooms. This illustrates a need to ensure all teachers have adequate and specific training on classroom management and project-based learning (PBL) methods during teacher preparation in the future.

Students' focus-group interview feedback regarding the Leadership Academy program was generally positive. A major benefit of the program's emphasis on group activities was on students' confidence and social-emotional learning development, which was particularly strong in the competency of social awareness. Most students expressed that they viewed themselves as a leader, though the majority of those stated that before they came to camp, many had felt that they were not leaders.

Parent feedback regarding the Leadership Academy program was also positive. Most parents (72.1%) indicated that they planned to enroll their student in a Dallas ISD summer program again next year.

Arts Enrichment

A full-day (8:00am – 3:00pm) Arts Enrichment program featuring live performances by musicians from the Dallas Symphony Orchestra (DSO) was held over eight days, Monday through Thursday, from July 8 through July 18, 2019, at five district elementary schools: Ebby Halliday, Louise Kahn, Maria Moreno, Ascher

² Due to summer campus construction, Seagoville High School's Credit Recovery Program was hosted at Seagoville Middle School.

Silberstein, and Daniel Webster. Attendance data for the program were unavailable. The program also included supporting social-emotional learning programming in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club. The DSO's component of the program is planned to continue as an after-school activity during the 2019-20 school year to allow students to deepen their interest and skills with instrumental music.

The results of Young Musicians Camp classroom observations were positive. At every site visited, the level of adult supervision was appropriate for selected activities, and age groups, and workspaces were conducive to the activity type and group size. All observed activities were well organized, with clear objectives, and all students were on task and engaged in 27 of 28 classrooms observed.

Thriving Minds Summer Camps

In partnership with the district, Big Thought coordinated Thriving Minds Summer Camps, which offered hands-on activities in the arts, such as visual art, music, theater, dance and creative writing. Lessons in social emotional learning were taught at ten elementary campuses: Casa View, Douglass, Burleson, Kleberg, Webster, DeZavala, Esperanza Medrano, Polk, and Geneva Heights. A total of 241 students attended the camps at Douglass, Kleberg, and Geneva Heights. Attendance was not reported by the other seven sites. The full day (8:00am – 3:00pm) program was held over 12 days from July 8 – July 25, 2019.

The results of classroom observations of the Thriving Minds Summer Camp were positive. All necessary materials were available and in sufficient supply for the large variety of creative tasks taught. All observed activities were well organized, with clear objectives. All activities observed by the evaluator appeared to challenge students intellectually, creatively, developmentally, and/or physically.

Parent feedback regarding the Thriving Minds Summer Camps was positive but limited to only one site. The majority of parents surveyed (84.6%) felt that the program offered their child exposure to subjects or experiences they wouldn't have had without the program, and 84.6 percent believed that the program provided a positive educational opportunity for their child.

Dunbar-Frazier Soaring Scholars Program

In partnership with Frazier Revitalization, ELO hosted the Dunbar-Frazier Soaring Scholars program at Paul L. Dunbar Learning Center, serving 94 neighborhood

students in grades kindergarten through five.³ Student academic and enrichment components were combined with recreational activities to create a full-day program (8:00am – 5:00pm) to accommodate the child care needs of working parents for six weeks, over 24 instructional days from June 17 – August 1, 2019 (with one week off for the Independence Day holiday). The program provided breakfast, lunch, snacks, and dinner to participating students.

Results of the evaluator observations of the Dunbar-Frazier Soaring Scholars program were very positive. Students had opportunities to contribute opinions, ideas, and/or concerns to discussions in all classrooms observed. All observed activities were well organized, with clear objectives. Teachers used positive behavior management techniques in 30 out of 31 observed instances, and students were observed to be engaged in learning in 28 out of 31 observed classrooms.

Feedback from students' focus group interviews regarding the Dunbar-Frazier program was overwhelmingly positive. Evaluators got a sense that students felt intellectually and creatively stimulated by the camp, while feeling safe to express their thoughts and opinions. Every student interviewed believed that they had improved a habit or habits, or somehow changed for the better as a result of attending the camp. Students frequently cited improvements to specific social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies such as social awareness and relationship skills, and often mentioned conflict resolution skills they had developed through practice during camp. Students explained that the camp's culture and high expectations helped them to cultivate the development of self-management and self-discipline competencies.

Parent feedback regarding the Dunbar-Frazier program was also positive. The majority of parents surveyed (90%) believed that the program provided a positive educational opportunity for their child, and 95 percent felt it was a safe place for their child to spend time. Parents rated their child's overall satisfaction with all aspects of the program experience at 4.6 out of 5.0, and their own overall satisfaction at 4.4 out of 5.0, the highest among summer programs evaluated this year.

Recommendations

- **Continue strong community partnerships.** Research confirms that effective summer programs include strong community partnerships (National Center for Summer Learning, 2009). The district's current partnerships have increased the visibility of

³Frazier Revitalization is a place-based nonprofit that serves as a catalyst for the revitalization of the community through economic and community development, investing in neighborhood improvements to attract jobs and services and

improve access to health care and quality of life, working with stakeholders in the area to build a stronger community with a focus on education, health equity, safety, jobs for residents, and affordable and quality housing.

programs and have offered invaluable resources. The Thriving Minds Summer Camps were staffed by Big Thought instructors and fully funded through a partnership agreement. The majority of ELO programming is implemented alongside a community partner, and this beneficial practice should continue.

- **Continue to provide all summer programming over a full day.** Affordability and access are chief among the characteristics of effective summer programs. Dallas ISD's summer programming is offered free of cost, including meals and snacks. This removes barriers to participation, and creates equity for the district's students. ELO's decision to implement solely full day summer programming is a research-backed best practice (Johnson, 2000), and according to survey data, one which parents appreciate.
- **Continue the focus on enrichment content that promotes character development and deepening SEL competencies.** The most effective summer programs work to promote character development and improve social-emotional learning skills (Bierman, 2007). Infusing the values of fairness, respect, and nonviolence into program curricula appears to decrease the display of negative classroom behavior in children (Flay and Allred, 2003). As Dunbar-Frazier Soaring Scholars students expressed, the camp's culture and high expectations helped them to cultivate the development of self-management and self-discipline competencies. These principles should guide all future enrichment planning.
- **Design summer teacher professional development to reflect desired outcomes with regard to teaching style.** While academic summer school teachers received rigorous training on the unique educational needs of their SERT and CRP students, enrichment program teachers have different professional development needs. The emphasis on PBL and student-led instruction means that instructors, especially those accustomed to a lecture style, would benefit from focused training on PBL implementation.
- **Improve data collection, communicate expectations, and improve data sharing with vendors.** The availability of data, from student enrollment counts to the return of parent surveys, varied greatly from site to site when outside vendors were involved. The district should communicate the importance of data collection and sharing with all program sites as imperative for rigorous program evaluation.

- **Consider school year continuation of successful summer programs.** According to the most recent (2017-18) Texas Academic Performance Report, 63.2 percent of the district's students are classified as at-risk. Since children who are exposed to higher levels of risk are more likely to benefit from longer-term interventions (Moore, 2008), the district should consider the continuation of successful summer programs into the following school year as after-school programming, as in the case of the Young Musicians summer program this year.

REFERENCES

Bierman, K. L. (2007). Anger and aggression: A developmental perspective. In T. A. Cavell & K. T. Malcom (Eds.), *Anger, aggression, and interventions for interpersonal violence* (pp. 215–238).

Flay, B. R., & Allred, C. G. (2003). Long-term Effects of the Positive Action® Program. *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 27(1), 6–21.

Johnson, P. (2000). *Building effective programs for summer learning, America Reads Program*. New Haven, CT: Yale University, Corporation for National and Community Service.

Mickelson, N. R. (2018). *2017-18 Evaluation of Summer Programs (EA18-160-2)*. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District, Department of Evaluation and Assessment.

Moore, K. A. (2008). *Lessons from youth development research and evaluation*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

The National Center for Summer Learning. (2009). *What Makes a Summer Learning Program Effective?* Retrieved May 23, 2009, from http://www.summerlearning.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=98&Itemid=420.

An electronic version of this report as well as the full 2018-19 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888. For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

© 2019 Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD)

Mail a written request for permission to use or reproduce any part of this document to:

Dallas ISD
Department of Evaluation and Assessment
H. B. Bell School Support Service Center
2909 N. Buckner Blvd.
Box 10
Dallas, TX 75228