

2018-19 Evaluation of Dallas ISD Early Learning Initiatives

Sarah Hinkley, Ph.D. & Sydney Rowles, Ph.D.

EA19-170-4

At-a-Glance

The goals of the Early Learning department are to improve kindergarten (K) readiness and to ensure that all students are reading on grade level by the end of grade two. The budget for the department in 2018-19 was \$19,694,012, an increase from \$10,824,300 in 2017-18. The purpose of this report was to summarize the 2018-19 context, process, and outcomes of the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) Early Learning department initiatives.¹ 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. Also included were analyses of K readiness and student academic achievement data through grade three.

What was the context of the Early Learning programs and the related 2018-19 initiatives?

The first Early Learning department goal 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. Thus, 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 2018-19 and the number of PK partnerships increased (from 21 in 2016-17 to 27 in 2017-18 to 32 in 2018-19).² Early learning staff members fostered community partnerships with Commit!³ and PK partnership sites. To expand the continuum of care, students from birth to age five also could receive services through the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)⁴ program and AVANCE.⁵

To improve classroom quality, the Early Learning department continued using PK and K through grade two specialists. Specialists provided individual support for teachers. The district employed 35 PK specialists and 46 K through grade two specialists; of these, 15 served as campus lead specialists.⁶ First, specialists participated in professional development (PD) programs and then provided teachers with training.⁷ Department staff members also provided summer PD for PK through grade two teachers through the district summer Personalized Professional Learning and Development (P2LD) program. Lastly, the Early Learning department provided training for teachers in PK partnership sites and for teaching assistants.

Another attempt to increase quality was a focus on assessing student-teacher interactions. The *CLASS*,⁸ an observation instrument, was administered by Southern Methodist University (SMU) to measure the quality of teacher-student interactions.

Finally, to ensure that students were reading on grade level, an increased focus on reading and language acquisition was implemented. The district used PD and specialist coaching to ensure that teachers were equipped to teach reading. The district also supported teachers with the new K through grade 12 literacy and social studies curricula.

What were the student characteristics and continuous enrollment rates of early childhood through grade-two students?

In 2018-19, 46,457 students enrolled in early childhood (EC) education through grade two. Over half of the students were male (51%), and/or Hispanic (67%), and most were economically disadvantaged (90%). English Learners made up 49 percent of students. In comparison to 2016-17 and 2017-18, the 2018-19 Dallas ISD EC through grade-two programs served fewer students than in previous years (48,311 in 2016-17, 47,122 in 2017-18, and 46,457 in 2018-19). K enrollment also decreased over time (11,486 in 2016-17 to 11,070 in 2017-18 to 10,992 in 2018-19).

¹ Detailed methodologies are available in the full report.

² As of December 2018. Dallas ISD teachers taught students in all settings.

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

⁴ For more information, see Rowles & Hinkley (2019).

⁵ For more information, see <http://avance-dallas.org/>.

⁶ As of December 2018. In 2018-19, all PK classrooms had a specialist and 47 percent of K-2 classrooms had a specialist.

⁷ A list of training given to and provided by specialists is available in the full report.

⁸ For more information, see <http://teachstone.com/classroom-assessment-scoring-system/>.

Seventy-seven percent of students who attended Dallas ISD PK in 2017-18 returned to Dallas ISD for K in 2018-19. This means that 23 percent of 2017-18 PK students did not remain in the district in 2018-19. Sixty-eight percent of 2018-19 grade-three students were continuously enrolled since 2015-16 (their K year).

What were the early learning teacher retention rates?

A sizeable proportion of early learning teachers were reassigned to non-early learning positions or left the district over the past three years. Of the 2015-16 early learning teachers, 73 percent continued to teach in an early learning grade level in 2016-17, but this rate dropped to 53 percent after two years and to 41 percent after three years. The early learning teacher retention rate was even lower for 2016-17 teachers, with 66 percent of early learning teachers remaining in an early learning grade level in 2017-18, and 49 percent continuing after two years. Similarly to 2016-17, 66 percent of 2017-18 teachers continued teaching an early learning grade level in 2018-19. This result 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 the Dallas ISD.

What was the quality of early learning instruction as measured by CLASS?

As in the last three years, overall results of CLASS indicated that district teachers were stronger in emotional support and classroom organization than in instructional support. Unlike past years, however, no consistent pattern emerged regarding higher average scores for emotional support than classroom organization. Although more than 78 percent of teachers met the quality thresholds for emotional support and classroom organization, at most, 58 percent of teachers met the quality threshold for instructional support. In the spring, 56 percent of PK teachers and 48 percent of K-2 teachers met or exceeded the quality threshold in all three domains. The district averages were above the quality thresholds for both semesters in all three domains with the exception of instructional support in K.

Compared to spring 2018, increased percentages of teachers met or exceeded the quality thresholds for the emotional support and instructional support domains in spring 2019; results were mixed for the classroom organization domain. All domain scores and overall scores slightly decreased from spring 2018 to spring 2019 with the exception of instructional support. However, none of these changes were statistically significant.

What percentage of students were kindergarten ready in 2018-19 as measured by ISIP and TX-KEA?

Of the 9,518 K students who took BOY ISIP in 2018-19, 51 percent were K ready (scored at or above the 40th percentile), which was the same as 2017-18 (51%). Of the 9,534 students who took the Literacy Reading domain of TX-KEA, 70 percent scored *On Track* indicating they were K ready. A higher percentage of DISD PK students (54%) were K ready than No DISD PK students (32%) on ISIP and TX-KEA (77% and 38%, respectively). Even so, 46 percent of Dallas ISD PK students did not meet the K ready standard on ISIP and 23 percent did not meet the K Ready standard on TX-KEA.

How did early learning student ISIP and Circle scores change throughout the 2018-19 school year?

For the English and Spanish administrations combined, the overall percentage of students at or above grade level in 2018-19 ranged from 48 percent to 57 percent (Table 1). There were no consistent patterns of change from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

In 2018-19, for PK, grade one, and grade two, the percentages of students performing at or above grade level on ISIP decreased slightly from the beginning to the middle of the year (BOY and MOY, respectively) then increased from the middle to the end of the year (EOY). The percentage of K students at or above grade level increased from BOY to MOY to EOY.

Table 1: 2017-18 to 2018-19 Percentage of Students in Grades PK through Two Performing At or Above Grade Level on ISIP

Grade	BOY		MOY		EOY	
	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018
	-18	-19	-18	-19	-18	-19
	%	%	%	%	%	%
PK	51	57	50	51	57	56
K	51	51	53	52	55	57
1	47	49	50	48	56	55
2	54	54	55	53	56	55
K-2	51	51	53	51	56	56

Source: PEIMS district data files dated October 20, 2017 and October 26, 2018. ISIP data files dated November 1, 2017 (2017-18 BOY), February 05, 2018 (2017-18 MOY), June 03, 2018 (2017-18 EOY), November 05, 2018 (2018-19 BOY), February 04, 2019 (2018-19 MOY), and June 05, 2019 (2018-19 EOY).

Note: Grade Level = 40th percentile. ISIP = *Istation's Indicators of Progress*. PK=Prekindergarten. 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.

The percentage of PK students scoring *On Track* on the Phonological Awareness domain of *Circle* ranged from 70 to 85 percent. On the Rapid Vocabulary domain, percentages ranged from 46 to 69 percent.

Did student reading and mathematics performance differ by Dallas ISD prekindergarten enrollment status?

Comparisons between *DISD PK* and *No DISD PK* groups on *ISIP*, *TerraNova*, and *SUPERA* showed that students who attended district PK attained *On Track* or at or above grade level (the 40th percentile) in reading and mathematics at higher rates 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 attained *Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+)* or *Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+)* at higher rates than those who did not attend (Table 2).

Table 2: 2018-19 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 %
Kindergarten Data for 2018-19 K Cohort		
<i>ISIP</i> (n=7,930)	58	45
<i>TerraNova</i> Math (n=8,781)	64	53
<i>TerraNova</i> Reading (n=4,145)	79	72
<i>SUPERA</i> (n=4,671)	85	78
Grade One Data for 2017-18 K Cohort		
<i>ISIP</i> (n=7,171)	58	49
<i>TerraNova</i> Math (n=7,495)	58	49
<i>TerraNova</i> Reading (n=3,202)	65	59
<i>SUPERA</i> (n=4,320)	84	78
Grade Two Data for 2016-17 K Cohort		
<i>ISIP</i> (n=6,521)	57	54
<i>TerraNova</i> Math (n=6,929)	62	56
<i>TerraNova</i> Reading (n=2,950)	61	57
<i>SUPERA</i> (n=4,024)	81	78
Grade Three Data for 2015-16 K Cohort		
<i>STAAR</i> Math App.+ (n=6,886)	81	74
<i>STAAR</i> Math Meets+ (n=6,759)	48	39
<i>STAAR</i> Reading App.+ (n=6,888)	75	68
<i>STAAR</i> Reading Meets+ (n=6,761)	43	36

Source: PEIMS district data file dated October 26, 2018. Assessment data files dated June 05, 2019 (EOY *ISIP*), July 02, 2019 (*TerraNova*), July 02, 2019 (*SUPERA*), and June 13, 2019 (*STAAR*).

Note: PK = Prekindergarten. K = Kindergarten. *Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)* includes the English and Spanish combined End-of-Year data. *STAAR* = *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness*. % = Percentage of students at or above grade level on *ISIP*, *TerraNova*, and *SUPERA*, and *Approaches Grade Level or Above (App.+)* or *Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+)* on *STAAR*. In June 2019, Dallas ISD received updated norms for grades one and two *SUPERA*. As a result, the grades one and two *SUPERA* data provided in previous reports will differ from the grades one and two data presented in this report. For *STAAR*, scores were included if the scores were the first administration. *Approaches+* results included Alternate 2. Alternate 2 test 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 2018 *STAAR* scores are included, some students' test scores may have been adversely affected by online testing issues.

Did students attain grade-level scores on TerraNova, SUPERA, and STAAR mathematics and reading?⁹

On the 2018-19 *TerraNova* mathematics exam, 64 percent of the K students performed at or above grade level, as did 57 percent in grade one, and 60 percent in grade two. In comparison to 2016-17 and 2017-18, a slightly higher percentage of students performed at or above grade level in grades K and one in 2018-19. The percentage for grade two students increased slightly

⁹ The *TerraNova*, *SUPERA*, and *STAAR* files were dated July 02, 2019, July 02, 2019, and June 13, 2019, respectively.

STAAR results included the first administration; *Approaches+* included Alternate 2.

from 2016-17 to 2017-18 and was the same in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

On 2018-19 STAAR mathematics, 77 percent of grade-three students scored Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) and 44 percent scored Meets Grade Level or Above (Meets+). In comparison to 2017-18, a higher percentage of grade-three students performed at Approaches+ and Meets+ in 2018-19. The district underperformed the state (78 % at Approaches+ and 47% at Meets+).

On the 2018-19 TerraNova reading exam, 79 percent of the K students performed at or above grade level, as did 66 percent in grade one, and 61 percent in grade two. On 2018-19 SUPERA, 84 percent of the K students performed at or above grade level, as did 82 percent in grade one, and 79 percent in grade two. For TerraNova, no consistent pattern of change over time was found from 2016-17 to 2018-19. For SUPERA, the percentage of students performing at or above grade trended downward from 2016-17 to 2018-19 with the exception of grade two, which remained the same the first two years, and then decreased from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

On 2018-19 STAAR reading, 72 percent of grade-three students scored Approaches+ and 41 percent scored Meets+. In comparison to 2017-18, a higher percentage of grade-three students performed at Meets+ in 2018-19. The percentage of students at Approaches+ remained the same from 2017-18 to 2018-19. The district underperformed the state (75% at Approaches+ and 43% at Meets+).

Recommendations

- **Continue efforts to retain Dallas ISD PK students in the district.** Twenty-three percent of 2017-18 PK students did not remain in the district in 2018-19 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 retaining 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 (54% versus 32% on ISIP and 77% versus 38% on TX-KEA). 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. Additionally, a sizable percentage of students performed below grade level on various reading assessments [e.g., grade-two TerraNova (39% below grade level) and SUPERA (21% below grade level)]. To ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of grade two, it will be important to continue 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 43 percent of PK teachers and 48 percent of K to grade two 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

- Hinkley, S. (2018). 2017-18 Evaluation of Dallas ISD Early Learning. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.
- Rowles, S. & Hinkley, S. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) Program. Dallas, TX. Dallas Independent School District.

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