

2018-19 Evaluation of Title I Curriculum Design, Resources, and Specialists Program

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At-a-Glance

The Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) received federal funds for curriculum development and implementation for the 2018-19 school year through Title I, Part A and Title IV, Part A Student Support and Enrichment (SSAEP) Entitlement. A committee of district administrators reviewed existing curriculum resources and determined that resources available to teachers at the time were not sufficient to meet the needs of students as demonstrated by data trends across multiple student assessments as well as individual student group performances and gaps in learning. Curriculum design programs were established to create a viable, coherent, and comprehensive curriculum for the district. The purpose of these programs were to provide teachers with physical and digital curriculum resources, assist with lesson planning and implementation, and provide personal support through grant-funded specialist positions.

Methodology

Appropriate federal funding proposal workscopes were reviewed to note program goals, plans for implementation, and amount of funding allotted for each of the relevant activities. In addition, formal and informal in-person interviews were conducted with program managers to gather implementation data related to the 2018-19 school year. Surveys regarding teacher experiences were administered by individual departments, and data were shared with the evaluator. Additional follow-up information was collected via phone and email.

Funding

Curriculum Design Programs were funded at \$1,271,730 through Title I, Part A funds. The Reading Language Arts Supplemental Resources and Curriculum Specialist Program was funded at \$647,462 through Title I, Part A. Additionally, the Dallas ISD School Board approved the expenditure of \$600,000 for

teacher writer stipends from the district's special revenue funds on March 28, 2019.

The Professional and Digital Learning program was funded via Title IV, Part A Student Support and Academic Enrichment Program (SSAEP) Entitlement at \$785,979.

Program Activities and Implementation

Dallas ISD Curriculum Design Program

The district designed and published a supplemental kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) Reading Language Arts and Social Studies curriculum package to create greater cohesion in planning daily instruction for teachers. The curriculum is housed on a digital platform and includes key components essential to instructional design as included in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) Resource System¹. The new curriculum's implementation was supported through professional learning community (PLC) support and ongoing teacher observations and coaching. The curriculum package was rolled out incrementally, with two six week instructional periods of content released at a time. The first two six weeks were available in August 2018, and all six six weeks were available in December of 2018.

The district hired teams of teacher writers who authored the curriculum content, which was then vetted by Teaching and Learning staff members in collaboration with campus representatives, to ensure high quality products.

On the teacher-created curriculum feedback survey, most respondents described the new units as "good" and found them to be "useful," and "helpful." Most respondents (n=121; 73.8%) found the "How will I teach it?" component² to be a helpful part of each unit. Additionally, respondents reported appreciation for the exemplar lessons included in each unit, with 66.9% (n=113) of teachers rating it "very useful." Powerschool Learning³ system usage statistics show 11,252 unique

¹ The TEKS Resource System is a comprehensive curriculum management system developed by Texas Curriculum Management Program Cooperative (TCMPC) and a team of content experts. Its focus is to provide districts and teachers tightly aligned high quality curriculum documents based on the state mandated TEKS.

² Other components of the units included: "What do I teach?" (rated helpful by n=89; 54.3%), "How will I know students learned it?" (n=51; 31.1%), "How will I respond?" (n=32; 19.5%), and "How can I get help?" (n=29; 17.7%).

³ Powerschool is a cloud-based digital learning management system for teachers and students. Teacher level accounts in Powerschool Learning may belong to teachers or other professional staff who require access to the curriculum units.

visitors with teacher accounts between August 9, 2018 and April 16, 2019. Teachers visited the online system a total of 430,241 times, spending 32,948 hours.

Reading Language Arts Supplemental Resources and Curriculum Specialist Program

The district funded supplemental reading resources and a Reading Language Arts (RLA) instructional specialist position through Title I to support schools in meeting the goal of teaching all students to read and write on grade level.

Supplemental independent reading resources included Booksource⁴ classroom libraries, Social Studies kindergarten through second grade libraries, and the Reading A-Z⁵ program. The grant is part of a three-year plan to outfit all schools with classroom libraries. Expenditures totaled \$559,445, with the bulk being used for Booksource libraries (\$466,600). The department spent \$54,120 on Social Studies libraries, and \$38,725 on Reading A-Z.

The RLA Instructional Specialist developed supplemental curriculum and assessments and provided in-person support and expertise to individual campuses. As of September 27, 2018, 63 classroom visits had been conducted. The specialist found that 44.4% (n=28) of classrooms were effectively following the scope and sequence of the Reading Language Arts or Social Studies curriculum, with seven classrooms (11.1%) using recommended key texts. As of April 15, 2019, after 246 classroom visits, 41.5% (n=102) of classrooms were effectively following the scope and sequence of the Reading Language Arts or Social Studies curriculum. The specialist noted the use of recommended key texts in 30 of the classrooms (12.2%).

Dallas ISD STEM Curriculum Design Program

The district began designing a supplemental K-12 Mathematics and Science curriculum package to create greater cohesion in planning daily instruction for teachers. Like the curriculum design project for RLA and Social Studies, the curriculum will be housed on a digital platform once complete. The new curriculum's implementation will include professional learning community (PLC) support and ongoing teacher observations and coaching. The curriculum package is planned to be completed by the end of summer 2019, for full teacher use during the 2019-20 school year.

The department hired 35 teacher writers for Mathematics and 31 for Science. Mathematics writers were asked to create three lessons per content unit, focusing on high level tasks and problem-solving tasks. In Science, writers worked together to create grade level curriculum collections featuring eight to 11 units for the year, organized by six weeks. Each unit contains between one and five 5E⁶ lesson plans for teacher use, constructed to a level where novice teachers can conduct the lessons with fidelity.

All content will be reviewed by STEM department staff to ensure high quality alignment to grade level content (TEKS Student Expectations and Process Skills), incorporation of English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), health standards, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies.

Each grade level writing team consisted of General Education, Dual Language, and Special Education writers. The STEM department will also collaborate with the Office of Racial Equity to ensure all lessons written by teachers are culturally responsive.

Academic Technology Program

Academic Technology staff members used federal grant funds to provide supplemental professional development (PD) and resources including the Clever⁷ portal and other digital resources to teachers, principals, and other instructional staff.

Staff members conducted face-to-face training on online course creation, highly effective feedback through digital platforms, designing instruction in the digital age, blended learning, using technology to support differentiated instruction, as well as application-specific trainings on Powerschool, Unified Classroom Learning Management System (LMS), and Google. Additional online courses were offered to teachers of all grade levels to help navigate the district's available technology resources. Topics included digital citizenship, Chromebook training, training on best

⁴ Booksource curates leveled libraries for classrooms that include content from over 150 publishers.

⁵ Reading A-Z is a comprehensive system of books and teacher resources correlated to state mandated TEKS, including reading lessons, decodable books, leveled readers, fluency passages, phonological resources, and vocabulary materials.

⁶ The 5Es is a constructivist instructional model which says that learners build new ideas on top of old ones. Each E describes a phase of learning: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate.

⁷ Clever Portal is a web-based single sign-on resource for teachers to access all their learning software and resources in one place.

practices in the operation of a 1:1⁸ classroom, ISTE⁹ standards, and learning by design.

Content specific online professional development was available via Cornerstone¹⁰, as a supplement to traditional courses in order to give teachers flexibility in completing their PD requirements. Course offerings are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: 2018-19 Professional and Digital Learning Online Professional Development Course Listing

Reading Language Arts
Small Group Instruction Grades 3-12 RLA
Habits of Discussion Grades 3-12 RLA
Mentor Text Strategies Grades 3-12 RLA
Academic Vocabulary Grades 3-12 RLA
Text Dependent Questions Grades 3-12 RLA
Social Studies
Inclusion in the Social Studies Classroom
Social Studies and the English Language Learner
Mathematics
Basic Fraction Sense – Math grades 3-5
Math and the English Language Learner 3-12
Inclusion in the Math Classroom 3-12
Science
Elementary School Lab Safety Training – Science
Middle School Lab Safety Training – Science
High School Lab Safety Training – Science
Advanced Academics/Gifted and Talented
Gifted and Talented Module 1A
Gifted and Talented Module 1B
Gifted and Talented Module 2A
Gifted and Talented Module 2B

Source: Data were extracted from Professional and Digital Learning internal records.

Note: RLA = Reading Language Arts

Recommendations

Consider continuing to find opportunities for teachers to create new and innovative curriculum. Teacher feedback indicated that curriculum materials created by teachers was high quality and useful. Teachers in the district have unique perspective and expertise on the best ways to reach our students through curriculum, and fully utilizing their talents benefits the whole district.

Work to identify the most talented, most effective curriculum writers. Departments should use available data to identify common traits in the training, certifications, and experience possessed by teachers who demonstrate exceptional skill at curriculum

creation and seek to recruit future participants based on these characteristics.

Strengthen professional development and continuing education opportunities for teachers in curriculum writing. Creating curriculum is a specialized skill separate from instruction, so teachers’ experience with it will vary. Teachers may not have been exposed to sufficient quality of curriculum creation methods in their coursework or may not have studied the topic in years. Bridging this gap would increase the quality of our teacher-created curriculum materials while building capacity in our teachers for the life of their careers.

An electronic version of this 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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⁸ The term one-to-one (1:1) is applied to programs that provide all students in a school, district, or state with their own laptop, netbook, tablet, or other computing device. 1:1 refers to one computer for every student.

⁹ The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) standards for educators provide a roadmap for helping students become empowered learners, leveraging technology use to improve student learning.

¹⁰ Cornerstone is a learning management software system accessible by web for administering, delivering, and tracking e-learning or training programs.