

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dallas Independent School District's (Dallas ISD) Refugee Support Services Program provides educational and social support to refugee students and their families to help ease their entry into the United States and particularly to Dallas ISD. The Refugee Support Services program, overseen by the Youth and Family Centers department, began in 1999. In 2019-20, the Refugee Support Services Program received \$126,579 through Title I funding, the same as in 2018-19 (Zhang, 2019).

The Dallas ISD Refugee Support Services offerings include the following:

- translation and interpretation services for school-related purposes,
- tutoring programs – individual and small group instructional support,
- transition services and assistance with educational placement,
- student and parent assistance with requisite forms and related school-entry information,
- school orientation meetings for parents on school related topics,
- staff development training to inform and educate school professionals about needs unique to the refugee population, and
- summer program.

Refugee students and families who have been in the United States for less than one year receive the highest program priority. However, the program may serve refugees who have resided in the United States for up to five years. Data in this report represent those served by the program who fall into both categories.

On March 13, 2020, in alignment with federal recommendations, the Governor of Texas issued a disaster proclamation certifying that the novel coronavirus COVID-19 posed an imminent threat of disaster for all counties in the state of Texas. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning on March 23 following spring break (March 16 – 20) until the end of the school year.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe activities and services that the program provided to refugee students and their parents.

Data were obtained from the Refugee Support Services program manager and the district student data file. Frequency and crosstab analyses were computed.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were student characteristics?

After removing duplicates and invalid student identification numbers, the refugee student data file included 188 students who received instructional support and transitional support services during the 2019-20 school year. Served students included first year refugee students enrolled in Dallas ISD. Table 1 shows characteristics of served refugee students.

Table 1: Characteristics of Served Refugee Students (N=188)

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	84	44.7
Female	104	55.3
Ethnicity		
African American	95	50.5
Hispanic	5	2.7
Asian	46	24.5
Other	42	22.3
Special Groups		
Econ. Disadv.	173	92.0
At Risk	165	87.8
English Learners	185	98.4
Special Education	5	2.7

Source: Refugee student data file 06/02/20. District demographic data file 05/29/20.

Note: Econ.Disadv.= Economically disadvantaged. An overlap occurs among special groups.

Served Students by Campus

Refugee students were enrolled at 14 Dallas ISD schools. Sam Tasby Middle School (MS), McShan Elementary School (ES), and Conrad High School (HS) accounted for 130 of the refugee students or 69.2 percent (Table 2).

Table 2: 2019-20 Served Refugee Students by Campus (Top 10)

Campus	<i>n</i>	%
Sam Tasby MS	59	31.4
McShan ES	41	21.8
Conrad HS	30	16.0
Adams HS	13	6.9
Gill ES	13	6.9
Hill MS	8	4.3
Truett ES	7	3.7
Skyline HS	5	2.7
Jack Lowe ES	4	2.1
Meadows ES	2	1.1
Others	6	3.2

Source: District refugee student data file 06/02/20.
District demographic data file 05/29/20.

Note: HS=high school. MS=middle school.
ES=elementary school. The category "Others"
includes Hotchkiss ES, Lang MS, Larry Smith ES
and Lowe ES. Percentages do not add up to 100 due
to rounding.

Served Students by Grade

Refugee students were enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 12. Refugee students in grades seven ($n=30$) and nine ($n=27$) constituted the largest group of students served, followed by those in grade three ($n=25$) and grades six ($n=20$) and eight ($n=20$) (Table 3).

Table 3: 2019-20 Served Refugee Students by Grade (N=188)

Grade	<i>N</i>	%
Prekindergarten	3	1.6
Kindergarten	9	4.8
1	9	4.8
2	10	5.3
3	25	13.3
4	7	3.7
5	8	4.3
6	20	10.6
7	30	16.0
8	20	10.6
9	27	14.4
10	11	5.9
11	8	4.3
12	1	0.5

Source: Refugee student data file 06/02/20.
District demographic data file 05/29/20.

Note: Percentages do not add up to 100 due
to rounding.

What program activities and services were provided?

Professional Development

Refugee Support Services offered professional development opportunities throughout the 2019-20 school year to Dallas ISD staff. Topics included cultural awareness, the refugee resettlement process, refugee student support services, and instructional objectives. Professional development sessions were offered on 17 dates from

October 2019 through February 2020 at Adams HS, Highland Meadow ES, Hotchkiss ES, Jack Lowe ES, Sam Tasby MS, Conrad HS, Lang MS, Communication Services department, and Health department. A total of 119 school staff members (principals, teachers, counselors, and other staff) received professional development in 2019-20.

Collaborative Efforts

Similar to previous years, Refugee Support Services collaborated with departments within Dallas ISD and with external agencies. Internal (district) departments included English as a Second Language (ESL), Student Intake Center, Psychological and Social Services, Special Education, Truancy, and various other departments across the district. Refugee Support Services engaged with a total of 25 different external agencies and participated in a total of 42 meetings or professional activities. External agencies included: Dallas Area Refugee Forum (DARF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Reading Circle, and Vickery Community Action Team (VCAT).

Student Support

Services students received from the Refugee Support Services program included tutoring, counseling, ESL enrollment, school enrollment, translation service, and Multicultural Student Club.

Parent Support

Services provided to parents included school orientation sessions, immunization updates, and provision of basic school supplies such as uniforms, dictionaries, and backpacks. Program staff members also acted as liaisons whenever schools needed to contact parents of refugee students. A total of 48 refugee parents or guardians attended school orientation sessions and 41 participated in parent-teacher conferences between October 2019 and February 2020.

Summer Program

The 2020 summer program enrolled students in grades Kindergarten through 11. The program was held virtually from 9am to 12pm Monday through Thursday, June 1 through June 25, 2020. The program utilized the at-home learning curriculum provided by Dallas ISD and used Google classroom and Zoom meetings to connect to students. The program focused on literacy, language, mathematics, science, and social studies and was based on state standards. In addition, the summer program provided several virtual field trips including the Dallas Zoo, Fort Worth Zoo, Dallas Museum of Art, and Nasher Sculpture Center.

A total of 118 students from 10 different schools enrolled in the summer program including McShan ES ($n=42$), Sam Tasby MS ($n=32$), Jack Lowe ES ($n=14$), and Conrad HS ($n=12$). Students in grade four ($n=19$), grade two ($n=16$) and grade three ($n=15$) comprised the largest groups, followed by grade seven ($n=12$) and grade eight ($n=12$) (Table 4).

Table 4: 2019-20 Summer Program Participants by Grade (N=118)

Grade	<i>n</i>	%
Kindergarten	9	7.6
1	4	3.4
2	16	13.6
3	15	12.7
4	19	16.1
5	7	5.9
6	10	8.5
7	12	10.2
8	12	10.2
9	11	9.3
10	2	1.7
11	1	0.8

Source: Refugee student data 06/10/20. District demographic data file 05/29/20.

What were attendance and academic outcomes?

Attendance Rate

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, attendance data were limited to the first four six-week periods (08/19/19 through 02/21/20). Of the 188 served refugee students, attendance data were available for 178 students enrolled during the 2019-20 school year. The average attendance rate for served refugee students was 95 percent, the same as the district overall.

STAAR and STAAR EOC Results

Due to COVID-19, Texas Education Agency (TEA) cancelled The *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* and *STAAR End of Course (EOC)* administrations for the 2019-20 school year. Data for previous years can be found in the 2018-19 report (<https://www.dallasisd.org/Page/62222>, page 3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to provide services and supports to refugee students. Refugee students are forced to leave their home countries and settle in a different environment where they encounter social, cultural and educational challenges. As a result, services are needed to provide support for the district's refugee students.

Continue to encourage refugee students and their families to take advantage of available resources. Attendance data indicated that 48 parents attended school

orientation and 41 parents participated in a parent-teacher conference. To ensure families benefit from the valuable resources and supports offered, refugees support services staff members should keep in contact with refugee parents and encourage participation in district activities.

REFERENCE

Zhang, J. (2019). 2018-19 Evaluation of Refugee Support Services. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

EA20-199-4

Jin Zhang, Ph.D., Evaluation Analyst II

©2020 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 Center; 2909 Buckner Blvd.; Box10; Dallas, TX 75228

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.