

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dallas Independent School District (ISD) hired Collier Educational Consulting to conduct an audit of the district special education program in 2017. A key finding of the culminating report was that English learners (ELs) who were dually-identified as receiving SPED services (EL/SPED) required additional, targeted supports. The report further highlighted the need to improve student identification and service provision for EL/SPED students. Thus, the BE/ESL department began collaborating with the reading/language arts, social studies, and SPED departments at the end of the 2017-18 school year to provide services for district EL/SPED students. The purpose of this collaboration was to 1) develop and support embedded EL/SPED differentiation for all learners in the general education curriculum; 2) facilitate collaboration among campus-based educators, administrators, parents, and EL/SPED specialists; 3) assist campuses in planning and implementing services for EL/SPED students at all grade levels; and 4) create and conduct professional development.

The EL/SPED program aims to support and assist the teachers of EL/SPED students.¹ EL/SPED instructional specialists assist campuses to plan and implement services designed to meet the needs of EL/SPED students at all grade levels. They also create and conduct professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, and other campus-based staff members throughout the district. Because EL and SPED services are not mutually exclusive, improving student identification and providing services and targeted support to EL/SPED students continued to be an important focus for the district in 2019-20.

In 2019-20, 30 campuses² were targeted for extra EL/SPED support because 1) they enrolled high numbers of EL/SPED students or 2) they showed high achievement gaps in 2019 *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* outcomes for EL/SPED students compared to students in general education or to students in special education who were not ELs. To meet the linguistic and special education needs of EL/SPED students at these 30 campuses, Title I

funds were used to boost multi-departmental leadership and provide instructional specialists at the 30 campuses.

In response to the COVID-19-related district change to at-home learning beginning on March 23, 2020, EL/SPED instructional specialists provided additional curriculum and campus support beyond the planned activities. Regarding curriculum, EL/SPED specialists wrote dual-language lesson plans to help ELs and EL/SPED students with at-home learning during the spring and summer.³ Specialists met virtually with teachers each week and collaborated with the SPED and Curriculum departments to develop best practices for teaching EL/SPED students during at-home learning. Specialists also provided campus support for students, parents, and teachers.⁴ In preparation for the 2020-21 school year, EL/SPED specialists began writing curricula that could be implemented in online or face-to-face classrooms, and all summer EL/SPED professional development sessions were conducted virtually.⁵

The purpose of this report was to provide data for campus, program, and district stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the EL/SPED program in meeting the needs of EL/SPED students in the Dallas ISD. The budget for the 2019-20 EL/SPED program was \$1,652,936 from Title I funds; this total was unchanged from 2018-19. Areas affected by the COVID-19-related transition to at-home learning were addressed in the associated sections.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of 2019-20 EL/SPED students?

Of the 70,004 ELs and 13,966 SPED students in the Dallas ISD, 5,334 (8% of ELs; 38% of SPED) were dually-identified as EL/SPED in 2019-20, accounting for almost four percent of all district students in 2019-20. In general, the distribution of students in most grades was comparable across all EL and SPED classifications. The percentage of EL/SPED

¹ For the evaluation of programs for district ELs and SPED students, see Voss (2020) and Mejan (2020).

² The 30 campuses included 16 campuses at the elementary school level (Adams, Blanton, Burleson, Cedar Crest, DeZavala, Douglas, Gill, Gooch, Jones, Sanger, Seagoville, Seagoville North, Soto Jr., Urban Park, Webster, and Wilmer-Hutchins), four campuses at the middle school level (Marsh, Piedmont Global Academy, Seagoville, and Young Men's Leadership), and 10 campuses at the high school level (Conrad, Jefferson, Molina, North Dallas, Samuell, Skyline, South Oak Cliff, Spruce, Sunset, and White).

³ While EL/SPED specialists primarily wrote lesson plans in Spanish, they also provided support for Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Nepali, and Swahili.

⁴ Specialists provided a newsletter with information about how to support EL/SPED students during at-home learning and highlighted the successes of teachers with EL/SPED students. They also leveraged an iPad pilot program from January 2020 that helped monolingual teachers to communicate with students and provided access to translation services and online resources (e.g., Rosetta Stone and Nearpod). EL/SPED specialists conducted "Coffee Chat and Zoom" meetings every two weeks to help parents and teachers navigate the transition to at-home learning.

⁵ Online professional development included topics related to instructional strategies and writing culturally relevant Individualized Education Programs.

students by grade level gradually increased from prekindergarten (PK; 2%) to Grade 4 (10%) and then gradually decreased to Grade 12 (4%). Student characteristics for EL/SPED students generally were comparable to the SPED and NonEL SPED students with respect to sex (67% male) and comparable to ELs with respect to race/ethnicity (mostly Hispanic). In addition, the highest percentage of district EL/SPED students were enrolled in the Northwest network (24.9%), and the lowest percentage were enrolled at magnet campuses (0.4%).

Overall, the number of ELs in PK to grade 12 has remained relatively stable from 2017-18 to 2019-20. However, the number of EL/SPED, NonEL SPED, and SPED students has increased by at least 12 percent during the past two years. These differences likely reflect an increased awareness and focus on student identification and service provision for students requiring special education services.

What were stakeholder perceptions regarding EL/SPED services and training in 2019-20?

Of the 45 teachers, four CICs, and 19 administrators emailed an invitation to complete the survey, 35 (78%) teachers, three CICs (75%), and five administrators (26%) completed at least part of the survey. Because a small number of CICs and administrators completed the survey, the results for all groups were aggregated in this section.

Prior to at-home learning, most survey respondents reported that they participated in professional development that addressed the needs of EL/SPED students, and they had favorable views regarding the collaboration of the LPAC and ARD committees.

- Seventy-one percent of respondents reported that they participated in professional development that addressed the needs of EL/SPED students.
- Seventy-two percent of survey respondents reported that both BE/ESL teachers and special education teachers at their campuses were moderately or completely aware that qualified EL/SPED students should receive both special education services and BE/ESL services, compared to 65 percent who believed that general education teachers were aware.
- Most respondents also reported that the LPAC and ARD committees collaborated frequently or very frequently (62%), were at least moderately effective at collaborating (80%), and were at least moderately important for student success (80%)

In addition, most (90%) survey respondents reported that they worked with the EL/SPED instructional specialists at least once prior to at-home learning. Other findings included:

- Forty-six percent of respondents reported that they worked with the specialist at least seven times prior to at-home learning.
- Survey respondents most frequently reported that EL/SPED specialists provided resources/materials

(76%), professional development (72%), in-class support (67%), and classroom observation and feedback (61%).

Survey respondent views generally were positive regarding the support from the EL/SPED specialists.

- Seventy-four percent of survey respondents who worked with an EL/SPED specialist rated the support they received as very or extremely helpful.
- The resources/materials provided by EL/SPED specialists was the highest rated support (86%), followed by in-class support (72%), professional development (70%), and classroom observation and feedback (69%).

Survey respondent views also were generally positive regarding the helpfulness (very or extremely helpful) of the professional development opportunities and resources that they received from EL/SPED specialists.

- Both one-on-one professional development (88%) and campus-wide professional development (73%) were rated the most helpful professional development opportunities, followed by PLCs (66%).
- Supplies and resource classroom implementation (84%) and technology resources (e.g., iPads and electronic dictionaries; 74%) were the most helpful resources for impacting student achievement, followed by online resources (e.g., Nearpod, Powerschool, and Ellevation; 70%) and materials created for lesson implementation (68%).

Prior to at-home learning, the majority of survey respondents answered favorably about the effectiveness of the E/LA and social studies curricula to provide differentiated instruction for EL/SPED students.

- Most respondents answered that the curricula differentiated instruction at least to a moderate extent (E/LA: 66%; social studies: 63%) or were at least moderately effective (E/LA: 59%; social studies: 63%).
- However, a relatively high percentage reported that the curricula did not differentiate instruction at least to a moderate extent (E/LA: 34%; social studies: 38%) or were not at least moderately effective (E/LA: 41%; social studies: 38%).

Once the district transitioned to at-home learning, most survey respondents reported that the level of support from EL/SPED specialists and the effectiveness of the LPAC and ARD committees were similar to before at-home learning.

- Most respondents reported that the support from EL/SPED specialists (59%) and the frequency (52%) and effectiveness (61%) of the collaboration between LPAC and ARD committees were about the same or more frequent than before at-home learning.
- However, a relatively high percentage of respondents reported that the support from EL/SPED specialists (41%) and the frequency (49%) and effectiveness (38%) of the collaboration between LPAC and ARD

committees were a little less or a great deal less than before at-home learning.

During at-home learning, survey respondents reported that the most helpful (very or extremely helpful) support that they received from their EL/SPED specialist included:

- online resources (57%),
- professional development (56%),
- Google classroom support (55%), and
- student/parent communication support (54%).

Survey respondents most often reported that technology support and online resources ($n = 10$; 37%) were the most successful supports provided by the EL/SPED specialists during at-home learning. Regarding the challenges that survey respondents faced during at-home learning that required additional support (23 responses), respondents most frequently mentioned that they needed translation services ($n = 5$; 22%) or technology support ($n = 3$; 13%).

What professional development opportunities were provided for campuses about the needs of EL/SPED students?

Professional development was most often conducted on campuses ($n = 9$ sessions), and 91 percent of professional development participants ($N = 663$) reported they were likely to bring the content from the professional development session to their classrooms or campuses, falling short of the 95 percent goal.

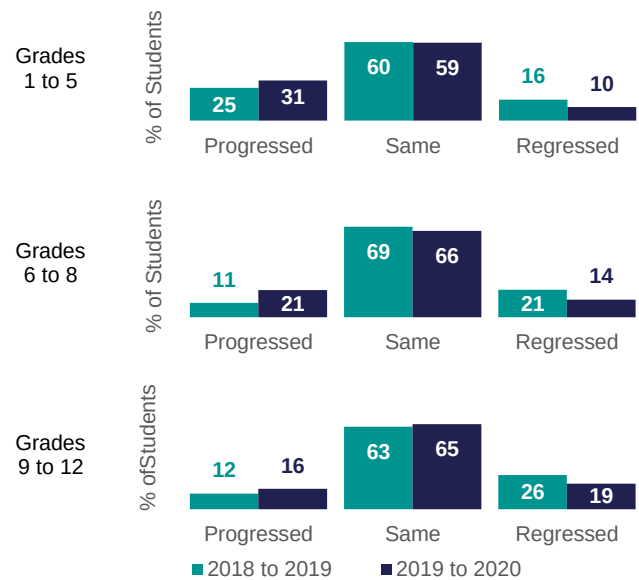
What were the assessment outcomes for EL/SPED students in 2019-20?

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the 2019-20 assessments for EL/SPED students were cancelled except for *Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)* and *TELPAS-Alternative (TELPAS-ALT)*.^{6,7} The primary achievement-related goal of the EL/SPED program was to achieve a two-percentage point increase over 2018-19 in the rate of EL/SPED students who progressed at least one English proficiency level on *TELPAS* composite ratings from 2019 to 2020.

In 2020, *TELPAS* composite ratings for EL/SPED students at all grade levels tended to cluster in the Intermediate level of English proficiency, with higher rates of students proficient at the Intermediate level in grades 9 to 12 (70%) than those in the lower grades (range: 56% to 62%). 2020 EL/SPED students exceeded the BE/ESL Department goal of a one-year two percentage point increase in the rate of

students who progressed at least one *TELPAS* proficiency level. Progression rate increases ranged from 4 (grades 9 to 12) to 10 (grades 6 to 8) percentage points (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2018 to 2019 and 2019 to 2020 *TELPAS* Level Movement



Source: District *TELPAS* data files dated 05/24/19 (2019) and 07/19/20 (2020). District PEIMS snapshot demographic data file dated 11/01/19.

Note: 2018 to 2019 Level Movement data obtained from Palladino et al. (2019). Level movement data include students who earned a *TELPAS* proficiency rating in both years. Because of the spring 2020 transition to at-home learning, 2020 *TELPAS* results and trends from previous years for EL/SPED students should be reviewed with caution and are provided for informational purposes only. Progressed = Student moved up at least one level of English proficiency from the previous year. Same = Student remained at the same proficiency level from the previous year. Regressed = Student moved down at least one level of English proficiency from the previous year. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Overall, 551 EL/SPED students took the *TELPAS-ALT* in 2020. Twenty-four percent of students earned the highest proficiency rating (basic fluency) on the 2020 *TELPAS-ALT* districtwide, with the highest rates in grades 6 to 8 and 9 to 12 (28%) and the lowest rates in grades 2 to 5 (18%). In addition, the percentage of EL/SPED students who earned the highest proficiency rating increased from 19 percent in 2018-19 to 24 percent in 2019-20. Proficiency rating movement patterns were relatively similar across the elementary school, middle school and high school levels for 2020 EL/SPED students, with almost half of students progressing to a higher proficiency level and about a third remaining at the same proficiency level. Forty-six percent of

⁶ Because of the transition to at-home learning and the resulting incomplete testing in all domains required to calculate composite scores for all students, spring 2020 composite *TELPAS* results represented 60.9 percent of EL/SPED test takers, whereas the spring 2020 composite *TELPAS-ALT* results represented 98.4 percent of EL/SPED test takers. Therefore, the 2019-20 results, trends from previous years, and goal attainment for *TELPAS* should be reviewed with caution and are provided for informational purposes only.

⁷ Of students who were assessed on at least one domain, the percentages of test takers on each spring 2020 *TELPAS* domain were as follows: Listening: 94%; Speaking: 94%; Reading: 95.5%; and Writing: 67.5%.

students progressed to a higher proficiency level, with the highest rates in grades 3 to 5 (48%) and the lowest rates in grades 9 to 12 (43%).

How did Dallas ISD EL/SPED students compare to other Texas large urban districts and statewide EL/SPED students on TELPAS and TELPAS-ALT?

Because of the statewide response to the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020, students in Texas completed the TELPAS at different rates. Therefore, comparisons of Dallas ISD results to those for other districts and the state are limited and are provided for information only. District rates of EL/SPED students performing at the higher English proficiency levels on the 2020 TELPAS were lower than state rates, especially for the older grades. District rates at the higher English proficiency levels on the 2020 TELPAS were generally comparable or lower than other large urban Texas districts, especially for the older grades.

District rates of EL/SPED students performing at the higher English proficiency levels on the 2020 TELPAS-ALT were generally comparable or lower than state rates, especially for the lower grades. Rates of students in Dallas ISD performing at the higher English proficiency levels on the 2020 TELPAS-ALT were generally comparable or lower than other large urban Texas districts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue efforts to increase awareness of EL/SPED identification and policies. While an 18 percent increase in the number of district EL/SPED students since 2017-18 may indicate greater districtwide focus on identifying EL/SPED students, survey respondents reported that general education teachers were least likely to be aware of EL/SPED policies on their campuses compared to BE/ESL teachers and special education teachers. Program leadership should continue efforts to increase districtwide awareness of EL/SPED policies.

Continue using EL/SPED specialists in their current roles. Most survey respondents expressed positive views regarding the professional development opportunities, support, and resources that they received from EL/SPED specialists. Thus, EL/SPED specialists should continue to assist campuses with meeting the needs of EL/SPED students and explore ways to make professional development opportunities more applicable for teachers, administrators, and other campus-based staff members.

Explore ways to improve EL/SPED differentiated ratings for the reading and social studies curricula.

A little over half of survey respondents who used the E/LA and social studies curricula reported that the curricula differentiated instruction to a moderate or great extent and was at least moderately effective at meeting the needs of EL/SPED students. However, a sizeable percentage (range: 34% to 41%) reported that the curriculum did not differentiate instruction at least moderately or was not at least moderately effective. BE/ESL program staff members should explore whether these ratings were affected by misperceptions, lack of training, or if more efforts are needed to further differentiate curricula for EL/SPED students.

Provide additional support for at-home learning. While most respondents reported that the support from EL/SPED specialists and the collaboration between LPAC and ARD committees during at-home learning were similar to prior to the transition, a relatively high percentage reported these supports were less than before at-home learning. Because of the uncertainty regarding the effect of COVID-19 on the upcoming 2020-21 school year, BE/ESL program staff members should evaluate the needs of teachers, CICs, and administrators to determine the additional resources and supports they need to meet the needs of EL/SPED students.

Continue efforts to improve the percentage of EL/SPED students earning the highest English proficiency ratings. While the rates of EL/SPED students who progressed at least one TELPAS proficiency level and earned the highest TELPAS-ALT proficiency rating increased from 2019 to 2020, district rates of EL/SPED students performing at the higher English proficiency levels on the TELPAS and TELPAS-ALT were generally comparable or lower than the state and other large urban Texas districts. BE/ESL program staff members should continue their efforts to improve the rates of students progressing at least one level a year to narrow the gap with statewide results at the highest English proficiency levels.

REFERENCES

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