

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dallas Independent School District (ISD) created an intensive targeted summer experience for students during the summer of 2019 (July 15 through 26), focused on key foundational reading skills. Additionally, the program design included planned touch points throughout the 2019-20 school year.

The Creating Accelerated Performance (CAP) program, marketed as an Awesome Summer Adventure, sought to accelerate the achievement of students who had not demonstrated proficiency in reading at critical transitional grades. Rising grade three, six, and nine students who were African American, two or more races, or English learners at select campuses were invited based on qualifying academic criteria.

The purpose of the 2019-20 CAP program evaluation was to provide context and implementation data so that program managers could assess the implementation of program components and operations, determine effectiveness, and plan future efforts. The evaluation examined the level of implementation of the program, participant perceptions of the programs, as applicable, and reading assessment scores.

As reported to the Dallas ISD School Board by the CAP Instructional Team in October 2019, the expenditures for the program's summer component totaled \$169,369.95.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of students and teachers participating in the CAP program?

Student Identification

The stated purpose of the program was to create an intensive targeted summer experience for students, in addition to planned touch points throughout the 2019-20 school year. The CAP program sought to create a yearlong experience that would accelerate student achievement by focusing on key foundational reading skills. Students were identified for invitation if they (1) were African American, two or more races, or English learners; (2) met at least two of the qualifying academic criteria; and (3) attended selected campuses with the greatest needs (six elementary and six middle schools were identified).

The CAP instructional team used existing Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) data to create student profiles for eligible students. They used this intentional placement method to place students in appropriate instructional groupings.

A total of 879 students across the three grades met the criteria to be invited to the program. Of those, 653 (74.3%) completed registration to attend. Ultimately, 404 students (46.0% of those who were originally invited to the program) attended at least one day of the summer session.

Rising grade-three students attended the program at either Thornton or Roberts Elementary Schools, while rising grade-six students attended at Atwell or Dade Middle Schools. The CAP program for rising grade nine students was held at the University of North Texas at Dallas (UNT). Out of the overall total of 404 program participants, 50 students (12.4%) attended one day of the program, while 100 of the 404 (24.8%) were present for all ten days (Table E1). A total of 304 students (75.2%) attended five or more days, or at least half the program.

Table E1: Attendance Rate of CAP Program Students (N = 404)

Number of Days Attended	Students	
	N	%
1	50	12.4
2	18	4.5
3	17	4.2
4	15	3.7
5	16	4.0
6	28	6.9
7	39	9.7
8	52	12.9
9	69	17.1
10	100	24.8

Source: CAP student registration and attendance files dated 08/05/19.

Note: Attendance data for 13 students could not be verified.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Student Characteristics

The majority of students attending the CAP program were African American (80.7%) while Hispanic students made up 16.1 percent, and roughly three percent of students in the program were of other ethnicities. Female students comprised 44.1 percent, while 55.9 percent were male. A total of 76 students (18.8%) were English learners, and 70 (17.3%) received Special Education services. Most CAP program students were economically disadvantaged (97.0%). Additionally, 31 attending students (7.7%) were identified as requiring dyslexia intervention.

Teachers

To prepare for the 653 students who registered to attend, the program hired and trained 71 teachers with a Teacher

Excellence Initiative (TEI) effectiveness level of Proficient I or higher. The CAP instructional team planned for low student teacher ratios (10:1) to best implement the intensive nature of reading interventions. A minimum of one Special Education teacher was assigned to each site to address the students' unique needs. Additionally, 18 teachers had Bilingual, English as a Second Language (ESL), or English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) certifications to serve English learners. Notably, 29 teachers (40.8%) were dyslexia specialists.

How was the Awesome Summer Adventure component implemented?

Advertising and Communications

The CAP program was marketed to parents of invited students as an "Awesome Summer Adventure." Parent information meetings were held at the home campuses of invited students on May 7-9, 2019. The Dallas ISD Communications department mailed the initial invitations in English and Spanish to families on April 29, 2019. A follow-up "Claim Your Seat" postcard reminder was mailed to the same families on May 6, 2019. A final reminder postcard was mailed to parents on July 8, 2019, one week before the first day of the program. The Communications department reported a number of mailings were returned as undeliverable due to incorrect or outdated parent addresses.

Professional Development

Half-day professional development sessions were provided to teachers on May 31 and from June 3-6, 2019. The sessions were differentiated by grade level and included a range of topics. The first day, May 31, served as an orientation for CAP teachers, covering scheduling, expectations, program goals, and administrative information. Teaching and Learning provided daily support to CAP teachers and staff during the program in addition to Professional Learning Community (PLC) support.

Enrichment and SEL

Enrichment and social/emotional learning (SEL)-focused activities were built into the program day during the summer component of CAP. Each morning before breakfast, students had the option of attending SEL activities, including mindfulness and meditation sessions. Each afternoon after the conclusion of academic programming, students were offered enrichment activities.

Technology

One-to-one technology was a major component of the program. The CAP program planned to issue each student a device to take home on the first day of attendance. Elementary and middle school students each received an HP Chromebook with a backpack, and high school students each received an Apple MacBook Air with a bag. Due to low attendance levels across the campus sites, a total of 249 devices out of the 653 expected were deployed.

Food and Nutrition

The Texas Department of Agriculture approved summer meal service for the CAP program. Students received free breakfast, lunch, and dinner during the program. Elementary and middle school campuses provided meal service in the school cafeteria, while the UNTD site received meals delivered from the district's Central Kitchen.

Student Transportation

Dallas ISD Student Transportation Services provided bus transportation to CAP program sites, via routes originating from four different district service centers. A total of 35 total routes were planned (27 regular education and eight special education) to accommodate the 653 registered students. Program management reported transportation issues throughout the duration of the program.

How was the Student Saturday Experience component implemented?

The CAP program was originally planned as a summer experience that would continue into the 2019-20 school year through seven Saturday sessions, running from 9:00 am to 12:30 pm at each of the CAP campuses. Sessions were planned for August 24, September 21, October 26, November 16, 2019, and a session each in January, February, and March 2020. Based on projected enrollment for Saturday sessions, 42 CAP teachers were invited to continue teaching the program during the school year. The academic focus of the sessions was the same as the summer program, with a low student/teacher ratio and an emphasis on enhancing and accelerating the development of reading skills. Due to extremely low attendance rates during the first three Saturday sessions, the decision was made to cancel remaining sessions for the remainder of the school year.

How did teachers perceive the CAP program?

A teacher survey was constructed to understand the methods and quality of training and preparation, curriculum design, logistics, communication between the CAP program, teachers, and parents of CAP students, and program impact. Overall, approximately 83 percent ($n = 59$ out of 71) of those invited completed the survey.

A total of 54 teachers (94.7% of 57 respondents) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the goals and objectives of the CAP program were clearly communicated to them. Additionally, 84.2 percent ($n = 48$ of 57) were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the quality of the professional development they received. Most (87.7%, $n = 50$ of 57) teachers reported that they had adequate time to prepare to teach the curriculum. Overall, 84.2 percent of those who responded reported that they felt adequately supported to teach the CAP program.

While 82.5 percent ($n = 47$ of 57) of CAP teachers felt that, overall, the quality of the curriculum was high, 14 of the 57 respondents (24.6%) reported that they "disagreed" or

“strongly disagreed” that the curriculum design was appropriate to address the unique needs of CAP students. Less than a quarter (22.8%, $n = 13$ of 57) of teachers reported that they adhered to the provided curriculum as written at all times. These teachers indicated that they differentiated their instruction and relied on a variety of lesson components, some outside the provided CAP curriculum, in order to keep their students engaged.

Low attendance was a concern throughout the program. Indeed, 96.4 percent ($n = 53$ of 55) of surveyed teachers reported that they were involved in making phone calls to families of students who had registered for the program but did not attend the first day or more. After speaking with parents, a total of 42.3 percent of these teachers ($n = 22$ of 52) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that parents were well informed about the logistics of transportation offered. Some teachers indicated that parents “forgot the start date” or “forgot about the program” entirely ($n = 14$). Others stated that students or families had changed their minds about attending since registering, had decided to attend a different summer camp, or had misunderstood the purpose of the program. Parents also frequently cited transportation issues to teachers ($n = 17$), including lack of understanding about routes and pickup locations.

Did CAP program participation increase the reading fluency and accuracy of participating students?

Dallas ISD dyslexia interventionists assessed CAP students using an Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessment. ORF requires students to read aloud from an unpracticed passage while noting their results through a running record.

A major program goal was to increase CAP students’ ORF Rate as measured by words-correct-per-minute (WCPM), reading accuracy and comprehension. The pre-program ORF assessment was conducted before the end of the 2018-19 school year, while the post-program assessment was conducted on the final day of the summer program. This approach allowed a six-week gap between the pre-assessment and the beginning of the program, so the possibility of “summer slide” may have occurred before CAP interventions began for students.

Between the pre- and post-assessments, grade-three students ($n = 65$) improved their WCPM by an average of 8.8 words per minute (27.7 to 36.5 WCPM). Students in grade six ($n = 103$) increased by an average of 4.7 words per minute (91.9 to 96.6 WCPM), and grade-nine students ($n = 68$) increased by an average of 12.2 words per minute (96.6 to 108.8 WCPM). Unsurprisingly, the largest gains were noted for students attending all ten days of the program.

The reading accuracy of grade-three students ($n = 65$) improved by an average of 7.8 percentage points (71.8% to 79.6% accurate). Students in grade six ($n = 103$) increased by an average of 0.7 percentage points (92.3% to 93.0% accurate), and grade-nine students ($n = 68$)

increased by an average of 1.8 percentage points (94.7% to 96.5%) between the pre- and post-assessments.

Reading comprehension pre- and post-assessment data was collected for 162 students, who answered five questions each. Grade-three students ($n = 19$) improved their reading comprehension scores by an average of 0.6 items correct (2.6 to 3.2). Students in grade six ($n = 80$) increased by an average of 0.2 items correct (3.0 to 3.2), and grade-nine students ($n = 63$) increased by an average of 0.7 items correct (1.6 to 2.3) between the pre- and post-assessments.

What impact did participation in the CAP program have in meeting grade level benchmarks?

District Fall 2019 *Assessment of Course Performance* (ACP) data files for reading/language arts courses were used to assess academic growth post-program participation in reading/language arts. Evaluators conducted one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for CAP participants to ascertain if attending the program made a difference in the participants’ reading abilities. No significant statistical or practical differences were found between the scores of students who attended less than half, 50 to 90 percent of program days, 100 percent of program days, and those who did not attend. Across grade levels and attendance categories, averages were below 70 (59.2 to 66.8), the passing standard for the exam.

Did students’ self-perception as readers show a positive increase over the duration of the program?

To measure students’ self-perceptions and agency as readers, evaluators constructed a reading self-perception survey. Items explored students’ beliefs about their psychological and physiological responses to reading, their interest in reading, their view of themselves as readers, and their self-perceived reading comprehension level. Students took the survey at each CAP program site on their first day of the program (pre-survey) and again on the final day of the program (post-survey). Survey data was analyzed for students who completed both the pre- and post-survey and who also had at least a 50 percent attendance rate.

Grade Three

A total of 53 grade-three students were included in the analyses. Third graders gave more positive responses to every item in the survey on the post-survey compared to the pre-survey. Notably, at the beginning of the CAP program, 33.3 percent of third graders reported that they liked to read out loud in class. By the end of the two-week intensive program, 64.8 percent reported that they “liked” or “loved” to read out loud in class, potentially indicating an improvement in self-confidence as well as a reduction in anxiety. Survey items exploring reading comprehension ability (e.g., “It is easy for me to understand the stories...,” “I can figure out the meaning of a hard word...,” and “I can

easily understand the main idea...,”) each improved by 16.7 percentage points.

Grade Six

The student sample for analyses in grade six included 96 students. Compared to grade three, increases in positive responses between the pre- and post-surveys were modest. However, students’ perceptions of difficulty in reading may have improved over the course of the program. Less than half (49.0%) of grade six students indicated that they “mostly” or “totally” agreed that books read in class were “easy” before attending the CAP program, while 65.6 percent reported that they “mostly” or “totally” agreed that the books read in class were “easy” at the end of the summer program. This was an increase of 16.6 percentage points. It is noteworthy that the reading level of materials used in the CAP program were more appropriate to the students’ level of reading proficiency, which may have influenced their opinions about the difficulty of books. Similarly, when asked whether they found it easy to understand the stories read in class, less than half (47.9%) of students in grade six agreed that they did at the beginning of the program, while 60.4 percent (and increase of 12.5 percentage points) agreed that they did after attending. More grade six students (60.4% vs 65.6%, an increase of 5.2 percentage points) reported that they viewed themselves as “good” readers after attending the program.

Grade Nine

A total of 31 grade-nine students attended at least five days (50%) of the program and had complete pre- and post-surveys available for analyses. The most notable positive differences in the pre- and post-surveys of grade nine students were in items exploring students’ personal relationship and psychological response to reading. After attending the CAP program, 64.5 percent of grade nine students reported that they liked to read (an increase of 12.9 percentage points), and over half (51.6%, an increase of 16.1 percentage points) reported that they looked forward to starting a new book. A total of 67.7 percent of grade nine students (up from 51.6%, an increase of 16.1 percentage points) indicated that they felt calm when they read, and 71.0 percent (an increase of 12.9 percentage points) reported that they thought reading could be relaxing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning from March 23, 2020 (following Spring Break) to the end of the school year.

Based on the key findings, along with the district’s transition to at-home learning, the following recommendations are offered for stakeholders for the CAP program in summer 2020.

Improve the accuracy of parent contact information. Teachers reported difficulty in contacting families via telephone who had registered for the program but didn’t attend, many times because telephone numbers were incorrect, disconnected, or no telephone number was listed. Further, large numbers of mailed program materials were returned due to incorrect or invalid mailing addresses. It is crucial that the program work to ensure complete and accurate contact information for registered families, especially given the change to virtual learning in 2020.

Address attendance data portal issues. Complete and accurate attendance data is critical to the evaluation of the program’s effectiveness. A major benefit of the CAP program’s move to a virtual learning format is the included attendance features in Google Classroom. The importance of documenting attendance should be communicated to all CAP program teachers and administrators.

Rethink the timing of the program. The program may be able to eliminate some of 2019’s attendance challenges due to families forgetting about the program or making other plans over the course of the summer by holding CAP earlier. Further, beginning the program right after the school year ends can reduce learning loss and allow for larger academic gains. CAP is planned to run from June 1 to June 19 in 2020.

Improve the timing of ORF baseline data collection. The gap of several weeks between the end of the school year and the CAP program meant that baseline ORF data were collected before students potentially exhibited learning loss, commonly referred to as “summer slide.” Collecting ORF baseline data at the start of the program rather than at the end of the school year will provide a more accurate picture of the reading levels at which students begin their CAP programming. Due to the closure of schools, baseline ORF data will be collected at the beginning of the program in 2020.

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C. Elizabeth Watson, M.P.A., Evaluation Analyst II
Akiva Lorenz, Ph.D., Evaluation Analyst II

Anduamlak Meharie, Ph.D., Manager, Program Evaluation

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For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.