

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dallas Independent School District's (Dallas ISD) Refugee School Impact 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 School Impact program was overseen by the Youth and Family Centers department from 1999 through 2020, and it is under Dual Language English as a Second Language (ESL) Department in 2020-21. The program goals include: 1) improving refugee student school performance and enhancing socio-cultural skills; 2) addressing significant barriers refugee students and families face in adjusting to school and community; and 3) providing educators with on-going professional development opportunities to enhance their understanding of the cultural and linguistic diversity of refugee children and their families. In 2020-21, the Refugee School Impact program received \$126,579 through Title III funding, the same amount as in 2019-20 and 2018-19 (Zhang, 2020 & Zhang, 2019). However, the Refugee School Impact program was funded through Title I during the previous years.

The Dallas ISD Refugee School Impact offerings include the following:

- tutoring programs – individual and small group instructional support,
- translation and interpretation services for school-related purposes,
- transition services and assistance with educational placement,
- mental health referrals,
- summer school program,
- parent conferences and school orientation meetings for parents on school related topics,
- resources for addressing cultural awareness and diversity,
- assistance with extra-curricular activities, and
- staff development training to inform and educate school professionals about needs unique to the refugee population.

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 2019-20 school year. To help district students and families access the internet during at-home learning, the Dallas ISD launched "Operation Connectivity" in May 2020, which provided 23,000 hotspots to families by October 2020. In 2020-21, Dallas ISD delayed the start of the 2020-21 school year until September 8, 2020 and implemented at-home learning districtwide for the first four weeks. The district also modified the school calendar from a six-week schedule to a nine-week schedule. On October 22, 2020, the district announced that campuses would provide in-person and virtual learning throughout the rest of the school year, and parents could choose whether their children participated in in-person or virtual instruction. In-person and virtual instruction included both synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. The district also continued to implement the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as well as state and local COVID safety protocols.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

The purpose of this evaluation was to describe the program's context, process, and outcomes for the 2020-21 school year. It is worth mentioning that the fiscal year of the Refugee School Impact program was from October 1st, 2020 through September 30th, 2021. Data in this report included the first three quarters (10/01/2020 through 6/30/2021) of the 2020-21 school year.

Data on program budget, program activities, and services were obtained from the Refugee School Impact program manager. Data on promotion rate, results of *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* and *STAAR End of Course (EOC)* were extracted from district data files. 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 285 students who received instructional and transitional support services during the 2020-21 school year (Table 1). Served students included first year refugee students enrolled in Dallas ISD.

Table 1: 2020-21 Characteristics of Served Refugee Students

	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Female	151	53.0
Male	134	47.0
Ethnicity		
Asian	122	42.8
African American	86	30.2
Hispanic	9	3.2
White	8	2.8
Other	60	21.1
Special Groups		
Eco.Dis.	281	98.6
At Risk	261	91.6
English Learners	277	97.2
Special Education	5	1.8

Source: Refugee student data file 07/13/21. District demographic data file 06/14/21.

Note: N=285. Eco.Dis.= Economically disadvantaged. An overlap occurs among special groups. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Served Students by Campus

Refugee students were enrolled at 18 Dallas ISD schools. McShan Elementary School (ES), Conrad High School (HS), Tasby Middle School (MS), and Lang MS accounted for 227 of the refugee students or 79.6 percent (Table 2).

Table 2: 2020-21 Served Refugee Students by Campus (Top 10)

Campus	<i>n</i>	%
McShan ES	154	54.0
Conrad HS	27	9.5
Tasby MS	24	8.4
Lang MS	22	7.7
Lowe ES	18	6.3
Truett ES	17	6.0
Gill ES	6	2.1
Hotchkiss ES	4	1.4
Stone, J ES	3	1.1
Skyline HS	2	0.7
Other	8	2.8

Source: Refugee student data file 07/13/21. District demographic data file 06/14/21.

Note: N=285. ES=elementary school. MS=middle school. HS=high school. Other=Adams HS (n=1), Seagoville HS (n=1), Spruce HS (n=1), Franklin MS (n=1), Hill MS (n=1), Stevens Park ES (n=1), Titche ES (n=1), and Frank ES (n=1).

Served Students by Grade

Refugee students were enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 12. Refugee students in grades three (n=60) and four (n=36) constituted the largest group of students served, followed by those in grade one (n=33), grade two (n=31) and grade five (n=26) (Table 3).

Table 3: 2020-21 Served Refugee Students by Grade

Grade	<i>n</i>	%
Prekindergarten	2	0.7
Kindergarten	17	6.0
1	33	11.6
2	31	10.9
3	60	21.1
4	36	12.6
5	26	9.1
6	16	5.6
7	15	5.3
8	17	6.0
9	15	5.3
10	7	2.5
11	4	1.4
12	6	2.1

Source: Refugee student data file 07/13/21. District demographic data file 06/14/21.

Note: N=285. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

To what extent did the program meet the outlined goals?

The Refugee School Impact program had 10 stated goals aligned with program activities for 2020-21 (Table 4).

Table 4: 2020-21 Outlined Goals of the Refugee School Impact Program

Category	Outlined Goals	Goals Met (YES/NO)
# of students receiving support services	250	YES
# of parents receiving support services	100	YES
# of students receiving SUP. instruction	150	NO
# of students enrolled in summer school	100	YES
# of students receiving tutoring services	50	YES
# of students receiving mental health Svc.	20	YES
% of student promotion	90	YES
# of parent orientation sessions	5	YES
# of P.D. training sessions	5	YES
# of TESOL training sessions	6	NO*

Source: Refugee student data file 07/13/21. District demographic data file 06/14/21.

Note: N=285. SUP=Supplemental. Svc=Service. P.D.=Professional development. TESOL=Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. *TESOL session was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student Support

The outlined program goal of providing support services to 250 individual refugee students was met. A total of 285 refugee students received support services through parent/teacher conferences, translation/interpretation, counseling, school enrollment, immunization update, online learning and hotspot application, and information on COVID-19 testing in 2020-21.

The goal of providing support services to 150 students for direct supplemental instruction was not met. A total of 135 students received direct supplemental instruction (tutoring, ESL instruction, and classroom instruction) and 27 students received mental health services.

Parent Support

The goal of providing support services to 100 parents was met. A total of 193 parents received support services from the Refugee School Impact program. 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 24 refugee parents or guardians attended 10 school orientation sessions and 17 participated in parent-teacher conferences between October 2020 and May 2021.

Professional Development

The Refugee School Impact program offered professional development opportunities to Dallas ISD staff members throughout the 2020-21 school year. Topics included workshops, summer program payroll documentation, consultation, and webinars. Professional development sessions were offered on 19 dates from October 2020 through June 2021 at Skyline HS, Conrad HS, Tasby MS, McShan ES, Lowe ES, and Truett ES. A total of 160 school staff members (principals, teachers, counselors, and other staff) received professional development in 2020-21. However, the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) training was cancelled in 2020-21, to ensure the safety of participants during the pandemic.

Summer School Program

The goal of enrolling 100 students in summer school was met. A total of 105 students in grades kindergarten through five enrolled in the 2021 summer school program. The program was held virtually for Jill ES and Truett ES students and in-person for McShan ES students from 8am to 2pm Monday through Thursday, July 12 through July 22, 2021. The program focused on literacy, language, mathematics, science, and social studies and was based on state standards. In addition, the summer school program provided a virtual field trip to the Dallas Museum of Arts. Students also took neighborhood walks to familiarize themselves with the neighborhoods in which their schools were located to learn how to walk to school safely.

Students enrolled in summer school were from three different schools including McShan ES ($n=94$), Truett ES ($n=10$), and Gill ES ($n=1$). Students in grade three ($n=37$), grade two ($n=18$) and grade one ($n=15$) comprised the largest groups, followed by grade four ($n=14$) and grade five ($n=12$) (Table 5).

Table 5: 2020-21 Summer School Program Participants by Grade

Grade	<i>n</i>	%
Kindergarten	9	8.6
1	15	14.3
2	18	17.1
3	37	35.2
4	14	13.3
5	12	11.4

Source: Refugee student data 07/26/21. District demographic data file 06/21/21.

Note: $N=105$. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Promotion Rate

Of the 679 served refugee students in the district, promotion data were available for 496 students enrolled in 2020-21. The average promotion rate for served refugee students was 98.8 percent, and 96.2 percent for the district overall.

What were the program outcomes for academic achievement on STAAR and STAAR EOC assessments?

STAAR Results

Out of 516 served refugee students in the district, 251 took the STAAR reading test in grades three through eight and 57.8 percent were at the Approaches+ Level¹ (62.9% for district overall). There were 235 students who took the STAAR mathematics test and 61.3 percent were at the Approaches+ Level (58.4% for district overall) (Table 6).

Table 6: 2020-21 Percentage of Served Refugee Students at Approaches+ Level for STAAR Reading and Mathematics

Grade	Reading		Mathematics	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
3	35	60.0	36	52.8
4	42	64.3	42	59.5
5	45	51.1	45	66.7
6	45	62.2	47	80.9
7	43	48.8	20	25.0
8	41	61.0	45	60.0
All	251	57.8	235	61.3

Source: District STAAR data file dated 07/12/21. District demographic data file dated 06/14/21.

Note: These students were excluded in the district's accountability system since this was their first year in the U.S. Approaches+=Approaches Grade Level or Above.

STAAR EOC Results

There were 60 students from grades nine through 12 who took the STAAR EOC English I test and 35.0 percent were at the Approaches+ Level (52.5% for district overall). Fifty-nine took the English II test and 49.2 percent were at the Approaches+ Level (58.0% for district overall). Forty-two students took the Algebra I test and 52.4 percent were at

¹ Approaches+=Approaches Grade Level or Above.

the Approaches+ Level (56.3% for district overall). Table 7 shows STAAR EOC results by grade and subject.

Table 7: 2020-21 Percentage of Served Refugee Students at Approaches+ Level for STAAR EOC English I, English II, and Algebra I

Grade	Subject	<i>n</i>	%
English I			
9-12 Combined		60	35.0
English II			
9-12 Combined		59	49.2
Algebra I			
9-12 Combined		42	52.4

Source: District STAAR EOC data file dated 07/12/21. District demographic data file dated 06/14/21.

Note: These students were excluded in district's accountability system since this was their first year in the U.S. Approaches+=Approaches Grade Level or Above.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Encourage refugee students to participate in support services provided by the district. The goal of providing support services to 150 students for direct supplemental instruction was not met in 2020-21. To ensure refugee students benefit from support services offered, and to improve refugee students' academic performance including on STAAR and STAAR EOC, Refugee School Impact program staff members should encourage refugee students to participate in support services including direct supplemental instruction, such as tutoring, English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, and classroom instruction.

Continue to encourage refugee students and their families to take advantage of the resources available. Attendance data indicated that only 24 parents attended school orientation and 17 parents participated in parent-teacher conferences. Refugee School Impact program staff members should keep in contact with refugee parents to ensure that they are aware of services and resources offered by the district and encourage them to participate.

REFERENCE

Zhang, J. (2020). 2019-20 Evaluation of Refugee Support Service Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

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