

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Compensatory education is defined in law as programs and services designed to supplement the regular education program with compensatory, intensive, and accelerated instruction for students identified as at risk of dropping out of school (At-Risk). The purpose of the State Compensatory Education (SCE) program is to increase academic achievement and reduce the dropout rate of At-Risk students. The goal is to reduce disparities between At-Risk and all other students in (a) performance on state-mandated assessments and (b) rates of high school completion.

State criteria for identifying At-Risk students are defined by Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081. Students who meet any of the criteria are to be reported through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) in the fall of each school year. Among the 14 criteria are English learners (EL) or students of limited English proficiency (LEP), students who failed a state assessment, or students who were retained. The district is required to submit the District Improvement Plan (DIP), two Campus Improvement Plans (CIP), and the local evaluation of state compensatory education strategies, activities and programs to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) annually.

For SCE funds to be allocated to a campus, services provided to students must be described in the district and campus improvement plan. A district's SCE allotment may be used for costs such as program and student evaluation; instructional materials, equipment, and other supplies required for quality instruction; supplemental staff expenses; salaries for teachers of At-Risk students; and reduced class size and individualized instruction.

The scope of the evaluation includes the program context, implementation, and results of the SCE Program budget for 2019-20. It outlines how SCE direct cost funds were used for supplemental services and programs, as described in district and campus improvement plans and in budget allocations and expenditures. The report also describes the characteristics of the 2019-20 At-Risk student population in Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), and compares the MAP performance, graduation rates, and dropout rates of At-Risk and Not-At-Risk students.

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. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD opted to administer the *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)* online for the 2020-21 school year.

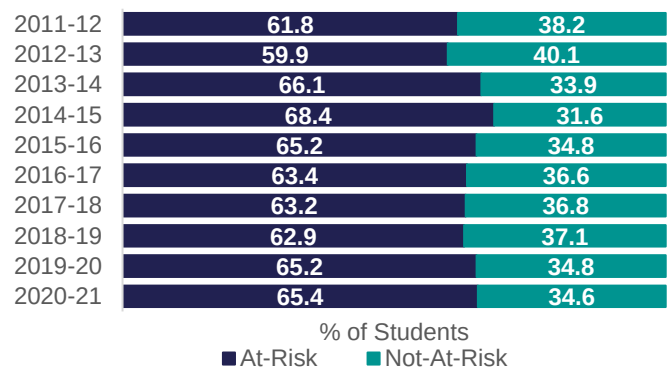
EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the demographic characteristics of 2020-21 Dallas ISD At-Risk students?

Results

During the 2020-21 school year, a total of 94,468 Dallas ISD students were identified as At-Risk, representing 65.4 percent of the district's grades Early Childhood (EC) - 12 enrollment (N=144,437). As shown in Figure 1, the percentage of At-Risk students increased between 2012-13 and 2014-15. From 2014-15 through 2018-19, there was a gradual decline in the percentage of At-Risk students but the percentage increased in 2019-20 and 2020-21.

Figure 1: 2011-12 through 2020-21 District Student Population by At-Risk Status



Source: TEA 2012 AEIS and 2013 to 2020 TAPR reports. District At-Risk indicator data files dated 08/19/21.

The largest percentages of At-Risk students were in grades 6 through 12 (Table 1). A larger proportion of At-Risk students were identified as Hispanic compared to the overall district student population. Similarly, a larger proportion of At-Risk students were identified as EL compared to the overall district student population. The most common At-Risk indicators for Dallas ISD students in 2020-21 were ELs, grade-level retention, and two or more course failures.

Table 1: 2020-21 Student Enrollment by Grade

Grade	District	At-Risk	
	N	N	%
EC	398	119	29.9
PK	8,973	4,279	47.7
KN	10,301	5,009	48.6
1	10,595	5,458	51.5
2	10,560	5,745	54.4
3	10,460	5,859	56.0
4	10,514	6,029	57.3
5	10,804	7,400	68.5
6	10,476	7,820	74.6
7	10,578	8,008	75.7
8	10,664	7,937	74.4
9	11,296	8,625	76.4
10	10,862	8,669	79.8
11	9,194	6,994	76.1
12	8,762	6,517	74.4
Total	144,437	94,468	65.4

Source: District student data file, 05/24/21.

Note: Data from the district student data file may differ from data obtained from the TAPR report.

What programs and services were funded by the SCE Program?

2019-20 SCE Funding

In 2019-20, the district received an SCE program allotment of \$213,050,262 from the state. The minimum direct cost requirement was 55 percent for the 2019-20 school year, or \$117,177,644. The district budgeted \$84,597,700 in direct cost to support programs/services for At-Risk students, and actual expenditures totaled \$99,346,724.

The primary sources of documents for SCE program expenditures are the DIPs and CIPs, which are required by state law. SCE funded programs and services must be described in the DIP if the program is implemented districtwide or in CIP if implemented at the campus level.

District Improvement Plan

The 2020-21 DIP was reviewed for SCE components. Like previous years, the DIP contained broad statements regarding strategies and activities targeting At-Risk students, with detailed plans to be set at the campus level.

Campus Improvement Plans

A review of 27 CIPs (five comprehensive high schools, seven middle schools, and fifteen elementary schools) showed that all schools conducted a needs assessment as required and set achievement targets aligned with campus needs assessments. The percentage of At-Risk students at sampled schools ranged from 17 to 91 percent. Strategies

utilized to provide assistance to struggling students included culturally relevant and responsive teaching strategies, social and emotional skills training, mentorships, increased parental involvement and student engagement, differentiated instruction, increased use of data for progress monitoring and identification of individual students' strengths and weaknesses, greater emphasis placed on quality instruction, and in-school and out-of-school tutoring. Greater emphasis was also placed on increased school culture and climate, teacher professional development, teacher proficiency, education, and use of Personalized Learning Communities (PLCs).

What were the academic performance outcomes, graduation rates, and dropout rates of At-Risk and Not-At-Risk students?

STAAR Achievement Outcomes and Performance Gaps

In 2021, the percentage of At-Risk students at Approaches+ on STAAR 3-8 and STAAR EOC varied by grade level and subject (Table 2). Overall, the percentage of At-Risk students at Approaches+ was lower than the percentage of Not-At-Risk students on nearly all STAAR 3-8 and STAAR EOC tests, resulting in a performance gap between the two groups. On the 2021 STAAR Mathematics test in grade 3, the percentage of At-Risk students at Approaches+ was four percentage points higher than the percentage of Not-At-Risk students and in grade 4, the percentage of At-Risk students at Approaches+ was two percentage points higher than the percentage of Not-At-Risk students.

Table 2: 2020-21 STAAR 3-8/STAAR EOC Approaches+ Rates and Performance Gaps

Subject	Grade	At-Risk	Not-At-Risk	Diff.
		%	%	%
Reading	3	58.2	62.9	-4.7
	4	55.8	58.6	-2.8
	5	68.8	83.9	-15.1
	6	45.6	82.5	-36.9
	7	53.4	84.0	-30.6
English I EOC	8	59.9	87.9	-28.0
		44.6	83.8	-39.2
English II EOC		50.5	90.2	-39.7
Mathematics	3	59.2	54.8	4.4
	4	56.3	54.0	2.3
	5	65.2	78.7	-13.5
	6	55.9	81.3	-25.4
	7	44.8	71.1	-26.3
Algebra I EOC	8	38.3	62.6	-24.3
		60.9	83.0	-22.1
Science	5	47.7	70.7	-23.0
	8	47.5	78.2	-30.7
Biology EOC		66.8	92.1	-25.3
Social Studies	8	35.6	69.7	-34.1
US History EOC		77.5	96.9	-19.4
Writing	4	43.3	47.8	-4.5
	7	39.2	80.2	-41.0

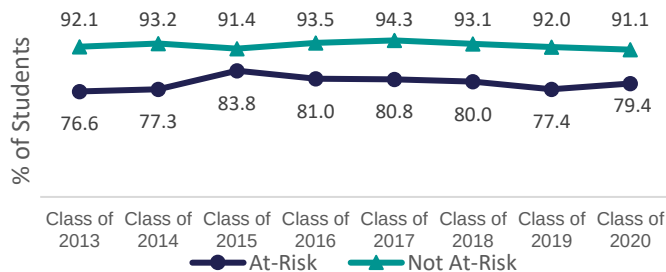
Source: District STAAR data file dated 07/12/21 and STAAR EOC data file dated 07/29/21.

Note: Diff.=Difference between student groups.

High School Graduation and Completion Rates

For the Class of 2020, there was a slight increase in graduation rates for At-Risk students (77.4% to 79.4%) while Not-At-Risk students' graduation rates decreased slightly (92.0% to 91.1%, Figure 2). Overall, graduation rates of At-Risk students are lower than those of Not-At-Risk students, resulting in a gap between the two groups. The gap for the Class of 2020 decreased markedly due to a 2.0-point increase in the At-Risk student graduation rate and a 0.9-point decrease in the Not-At-Risk student graduation rate.

Figure 2: Graduation Rates by Cohort and At-Risk Status: Class of 2013 to Class of 2020

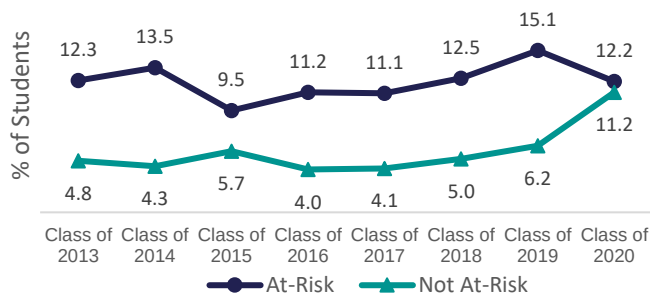


Source: TEA Completion, Graduation, and Dropout data.

Note: Data reported are the federal graduation rates. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional student data tracking may have been disrupted and data for the Class of 2020 should be viewed with caution.

For the Class of 2020, there was a noticeable decrease in dropout rates for At-Risk students (15.1% to 12.2%) while Not-At-Risk student dropout rates increased markedly (6.2% to 11.2%, Figure 3). The Class of 2020 dropout rate for At-Risk students was lower than the prior two graduating classes. Dropout rates of At-Risk students were higher than those of Not-At-Risk students for all years, resulting in a gap between the two groups.

Figure 3: Dropout Rates by Cohort and At-Risk Status: Class of 2013 to Class of 2020



Source: TEA Completion, Graduation, and Dropouts data.

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional student data tracking may have been disrupted and data for the Class of 2020 should be viewed with caution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As recommended in previous years, designate a full-time SCE program administrator. At its current level of funding, with an overall budget of approximately \$213 million, oversight would help to ensure that funds are used efficiently and effectively.

As recommended in previous years, require central organizations to apply for SCE funds. In 2011-12 and 2012-13, central organizations that received SCE funds were required to submit Project Workscopes to the district's Budget Services department. That requirement was discontinued in 2014-15. Reinstatement would provide documentation for the use of SCE funds and facilitate evaluation of services and activities supported by central SCE expenditures.

As recommended in previous years, ensure adequate funding and support is provided through SCE to decrease At-Risk student dropout rates. The dropout rate for the Class of 2020 At-Risk students (12.2%) continues to be higher than Not-At-Risk students over the past eight classes (4.0% to 11.2%).

REFERENCES

- Texas Education Agency (2019). *Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS): 2011-12*. Retrieved from <https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/aeis/index.html>.
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- Texas Education Agency (2020b). *Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR): 2012-13 through 2019-20*. Retrieved from <https://tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/index.html>.

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