2020-21

DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Evaluation of the Special Education for English Learners Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY[1]

The Dallas Independent School District (ISD) hired Collier Educational Consulting to conduct an audit of the district special education (SPED) program in 2017. A key finding of the culminating report was that English learners (ELs) who were dually-identified as receiving SPED services (ELSPED) required additional, targeted supports. The report further highlighted the need to improve student identification and service provision for ELSPED students. Thus, the Bilingual/English as a Second Language (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 ELSPED students. The purpose of this collaboration was to 1) develop and support embedded ELSPED differentiation for all learners in the general education curriculum; 2) facilitate collaboration among campus-based educators, administrators, parents, and ELSPED specialists; 3) assist campuses in planning and implementing services for ELSPED students at all grade levels; and 4) create and conduct professional development. For the full evaluation of programs serving ELSPED students and detailed methodology, see the full report (Voss, 2021).

The ELSPED program aimed to support and assist ELSPED students and their teachers.[2] Twenty-one ELSPED instructional specialists assisted campuses to plan and implement services designed to meet the needs of ELSPED students at all grade levels. They also created and conducted 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 ELSPED students continued to be an important focus for the district in 2020-21.

In 2020-21, 22 campuses[3] were targeted for extra ELSPED support because 1) they enrolled high numbers of ELSPED students or 2) they showed high achievement gaps in 2019 *State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness* (*STAAR*) outcomes for ELSPED students compared to students in general education or to students in special education who were not ELs (NonEL SPED). To meet the linguistic and special education needs of ELSPED students at the 22 campuses, Title I funds were used to support multi-departmental leadership and provide instructional specialists at these campuses.

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. 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. 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 purpose of this report was to provide data for campus, program, and district stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of the ELSPED program in meeting the needs of ELSPED students in the Dallas ISD. The budget for the 2020-21 ELSPED program was $1,778,308 from Title I funds, an increase of $489,226 from 2019-20.[4]

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What were the characteristics of 2020-21 ELSPED students?

Of the 67,206 ELs and 13,772 SPED students in the Dallas ISD, 5,435 (8% of ELs; 39% of SPED) were dually-identified as ELSPED in 2020-21, accounting for almost four percent of all district students (*N* = 145,386). In general, the distribution of students in most grades was comparable across all EL and SPED classifications. The percentage of ELSPED students by grade level gradually increased from prekindergarten (PK; 1%) to Grade 5 (11%) and then gradually decreased to Grade 12 (5%). Overall, the number of ELSPED (+6%) and NonEL SPED (+8%) students increased over the last two years, the number of all SPED students remained relatively consistent, and the number of ELs and the district overall decreased over two years. Student characteristics for ELSPED students were generally comparable to SPED students overall and to 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 ELSPED students was enrolled in the Northwest network

[1] This executive summary was adapted from Barton and Voss (2020b).
[2] For the evaluation of programs for district ELs and SPED students, see Voss and Kim (2021) and Mejan (2021), respectively.
[3] For a complete list of ELSPED supported campuses, see Appendix A of the full report (Voss, 2021).
[4] Provided by program staff members on 04/05/21. Special Revenue Funds Management also provided the budget amount as of 02/28/21; Title I funds were reported as $1,927,104.

(24%), and the lowest percentages were enrolled at Early Learning and magnet campuses (<1% for both).

What were stakeholder perceptions regarding ELSPED services and training in 2020-21?

Title III ELSPED Survey

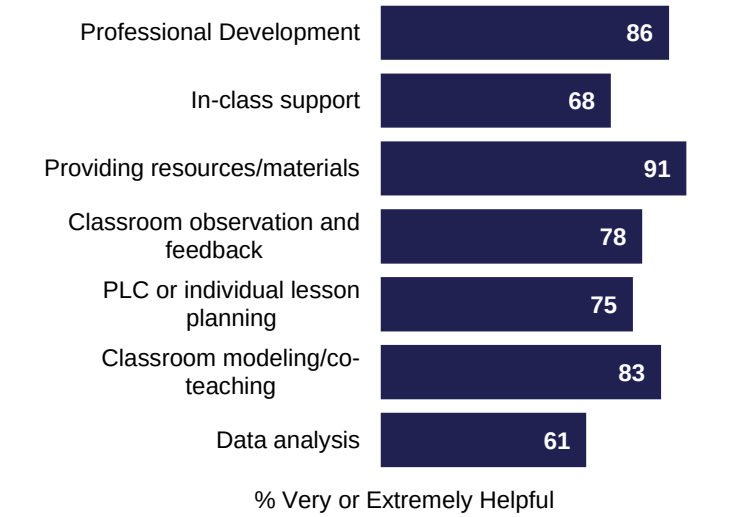
Of the 64 staff members emailed an invitation to complete the survey, 29 (45%) completed at least part of the survey. Because a small number of Campus Instructional Coaches (CICs; *n* = 1) and administrators (*n* = 0) completed the survey, the results for all groups were aggregated in this section. Because of the low survey response rate, survey results are provided for informational purposes and should be reviewed with caution.

Most survey respondents reported that they participated in professional development that addressed the needs of ELSPED students (76%), and they had favorable views regarding the collaboration of the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) and Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committees. Specifically, 56 percent of respondents rated LPAC and ARD collaboration as a high or very high priority on their campuses. Most respondents also reported that the LPAC and ARD committees collaborated frequently or very frequently (72%), were at least moderately effective at collaborating (73%), and were at least moderately important for student success (80%).

In addition, most (86%) survey respondents reported that they worked with the ELSPED instructional specialists at least once. The highest rate of respondents (40%) reported that they worked with the specialist more than 10 times. Regarding the supports that ELSPED specialists provided in 2020-21, survey respondents most frequently reported that ELSPED specialists provided resources/materials (68%) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or individual lesson planning (63%).

Most survey respondents who worked with an ELSPED specialist rated the supports they received as very or extremely helpful (range: 61% to 91%; Figure 1). The BE/ESL Department also set a goal to have 40 percent of teachers and CICs and 60 percent of administrators rating the aggregated helpfulness of supports provided by the ELSPED specialists as very or extremely helpful. Overall, teachers and CICs met the department's goal (78%), whereas the administrator goal could not be assessed as no administrators completed the survey.

Figure 1: 2020-21 Title III ELSPED Survey – Helpfulness of Supports from ELSPED Instructional Specialists



Source: 2020-21 Title III ELSPED Survey, administered spring 2021.
Note: Rates do not include results for respondents who responded that they did not work with an ELSPED Instructional Specialist. For *N*s and detailed survey response rates by question, see Appendix C in the full report. PLC = Professional Learning Community.

One-on-one professional development (95%) and campus-wide professional development (94%) were the highest rated professional development opportunities, followed by PLCs (74%). In addition, most respondents reported that supplies and resources for classroom implementation (67%) and online resources (e.g., Ellevation, Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, Imagine Learning; 67%) were very or extremely helpful resources for impacting student achievement.

What professional development opportunities were provided for campuses about the needs of ELSPED students?

While the number of professional development session types and attendance varied, the districtwide (as opposed to campus-based) sessions accounted for the most sessions (*n* = 19) and the largest number of attendees (*n* = 332) in 2020-21.

What were the assessment outcomes for ELSPED students in 2020-21?

The BE/ESL Department aimed to reach two primary goals for 2020-21. The first goal was to not see an increase in the percentage of ELSPED students who regressed on their *Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)* composite from 2021 as compared to the percentage of ELSPED students that regressed from 2019.[5]

[5] 2019 level movement data include students who earned a *TELPAS* proficiency rating in both 2018 and 2019. 2021 level movement data include students who earned a *TELPAS* proficiency rating in both 2020 and 2021.

The second goal was to at least maintain the percentage of ELSPED students meeting the Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) performance standard on *STAAR* in 2021 as compared to the rate of ELSPED students meeting Approaches+ in 2019.

TELPAS and *TELPAS-Alternate (TELPAS-Alt)*

2021 TELPAS composite ratings for ELSPED students at all grade levels tended to cluster in the intermediate level of English proficiency, and 59 to 70 percent of ELSPED students who took the *TELPAS* in 2020 and 2021 remained at the same proficiency level. 2021 ELSPED students overall exceeded the BE/ESL Department goal to at least maintain the percentage of students who regressed on *TELPAS* composite from 2019 to 2021 (regression rates decreased by 5%). Generally, two-year trends varied.

Overall, 593 ELSPED students took the *TELPAS-Alt* in 2021. Twenty-three percent of students earned the highest proficiency rating (basic fluency) on the 2021 *TELPAS-Alt* districtwide, a four-percentage-point increase over two years. Proficiency rating movement patterns for *TELPAS-Alt* were relatively similar across the elementary, middle, and high school levels for 2021 ELSPED students, with over 40 percent of students progressing to a higher proficiency level and about a third remaining at the same proficiency level.

Measures of Academic Progress (*MAP*)

Beginning-of-year (BOY) to end-of-year (EOY) mathematics *MAP* growth quintile rates of ELSPED students clustered in either the Low (up to the 20th percentile) quintile (range: 18%, grades 2 to 5, Spanish to 35%, grades 2 to 5, English) or the High (80th percentile and above) quintile (range: 23%, grades 2 to 5, English to 64%, grades 2 to 5, Spanish). BOY to EOY reading *MAP* growth quintile rates of ELSPED students clustered in the Low quintile (range: 32%, grade 1, English to 55%, grades 6 to 8, English). Overall, for both mathematics and reading, ELSPED quintile rates tended to be closer to rates for NonEL SPED students and SPED students overall than they were to those for ELs overall.

STAAR/End-Of-Course (EOCs) and *STAAR Alt 2*

Fewer students tested in 2021 than in 2019 as a result of lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; results and comparisons should be reviewed with caution.

STAAR. 2021 rates of grade three to five and grades six to eight ELSPED students scoring at the Approaches+ performance standard across subjects and grade levels were consistently among the lowest of all groups examined; percentages ranged from 28 (grades six to eight reading) to 44 (grades three to five mathematics) percent. For both grade level groupings, ELSPED student rates tended to be closer to rates for NonEL SPED students and SPED students overall than they were to those for ELs overall.

EOC. Rates of ELSPED students scoring at the Approaches+ performance standard across subjects on *EOCs* were generally among the lowest of all groups examined, ranged from 20 (English I) to 49 (Algebra I) percent, and tended to be closer to rates for NonEL SPED students and SPED students overall than they were to those for ELs overall.

STAAR and EOC Alt 2. In 2021, 11 to 17 percent of students who took *STAAR* subtests and 11 to 15 percent of students who took *EOC*s were administered the *Alternate 2* version. Rates of students at the Approaches+ performance standard on the *Alternate 2* version were higher than for the standard version on all tests and ranged from 86 to 100 percent.

How did Dallas ISD outcomes for ELSPED students compare to other Texas large, urban districts and the state on select TEA accountability measures in 2020-21?

District rates of ELSPED students performing at the higher English proficiency levels on the 2021 *TELPAS* were generally comparable to or lower than state and other Texas large, urban district rates.

District performance level rates of ELSPED students on *TELPAS-Alt, STAAR,* and *EOCs* were generally comparable to or higher than state and other Texas large, urban district rates, with some exceptions. *STAAR* and *EOC Alternate 2* comparisons were mixed

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue efforts to increase awareness of ELSPED identification and policies. Twenty-four percent of survey respondents reported that they did not participate in professional development that addressed the needs of ELSPED students. Program leadership should continue efforts to increase districtwide awareness of ELSPED policies and practices.

Continue using ELSPED specialists in their current roles. Most survey respondents expressed positive views regarding the professional development opportunities, support, and resources that they received from ELSPED specialists. Thus, ELSPED specialists should continue to assist campuses with meeting the needs of ELSPED students.

Continue efforts to improve the percentage of ELSPED students earning the highest English proficiency ratings. While the rates of ELSPED students who progressed at least one *TELPAS* proficiency level increased from 2020 to 2021, district rates of ELSPED students performing at the higher English proficiency levels on the *TELPAS* were generally comparable to 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.

Bolster efforts to improve assessment ratings of ELSPED students. Compared to other classifications of students, rates of ELSPED students were generally among the lowest of all groups examined on *MAP*, *STAAR* Approaches+, and *EOCs*. BE/ESL program staff members should continue their efforts to improve the assessment ratings of ELSPED students to narrow the gap between ELSPED students and other classifications of students.

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