

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dallas Independent School District (ISD) provides specialized services and accommodations to students with disabilities. Federal laws and State of Texas accountability systems provide a framework that helps shape and guide special education (SPED) programming within the district.

During the 2019-20 school year, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD transitioned students to at-home learning on March 23 until the end of the school year. In 2020-21, Dallas ISD delayed the start of the school year until September 8, 2020 and implemented at home learning districtwide for the first four weeks. In 2021-22, the district returned to in-person instruction for all students, with minimal exceptions. The district offered virtual learning to a small subset of students who met district eligibility requirements. To help mitigate learning loss and further support students, the district offered three different school calendars in 2021-22 (School-Day Redesign, Intersession, and Base/Traditional) and other supports.¹

The purpose of this report was to describe the SPED program, to summarize trends in the characteristics and academic performance of students served by the SPED department, and to summarize feedback from stakeholders.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

What was the source and amount of funding for the Special Education program in 2021-22?

- The total budget for the 2021-22 SPED program was \$142,326,859, which is an increase from \$140,146,648 in 2020-21.
- In 2021-22, the SPED department also received \$6,623,150 in ESSER funding.

How did the Special Education program perform on the 2020-21 RDA Report?

- Three SPED program areas were assigned a performance level (PL) of zero. Seven SPED program areas received a PL of three or higher.
- The district outperformed the state in two SPED program areas (SPED STAAR 3-8 Passing Rate in Mathematics and SPED Year-After-Exit STAAR 3-8 Passing Rate in Social Studies). Eleven SPED program areas were commensurate with state performance.

What were the characteristics of students with disabilities and Special Education program teachers?

Student Characteristics

- In 2021-22, 15,762 students with disabilities (11.1% of district enrollment) received SPED services, compared to 14,095 in 2020-21 (Table 1).
- The proportion of Black or African American students receiving SPED services (26.3%) was larger than the general education rate (19.6%).
- Emergent Bilingual (EB) students constituted 42.2 percent of students receiving SPED services.

Table 1: 2021-22 Dallas ISD SPED and General Education Enrollment by Student Group

	SPED (N=15,762)		General Education (N=125,742)	
	n	%	n	%
Sex				
Female	5,293	33.6	64,155	51.0
Male	10,469	66.4	61,587	49.0
Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	10,372	65.8	89,937	71.5
Black or Afr Amer	4,140	26.3	24,598	19.6
White	804	5.1	6,860	5.5
Other	446	2.8	4,347	3.5
Student Groups				
Eco. Dis.	13,881	88.1	106,512	84.7
EB	6,644	42.2	61,712	49.1
Homeless	331	2.1	2,549	2.0

Source: District student demographic data file dated May 16, 2022 (2021-22).

Note: Afr Amer=African American, Eco.Dis.=Economically Disadvantaged; EB=Emergent Bilingual.

- The most common primary disabilities of students receiving SPED services were specific learning disability (31.4%), autism (26.3%), other health impairment (13.1%), and speech impairments (11.9%).
- Among students with specific learning disabilities, 16 percent had speech impairment as a secondary disability. Among students with autism, 58 percent were also diagnosed with speech impairment as secondary disability.
- The largest percentage of students with disabilities receiving SPED services were placed into a

¹ Additional information can be found at <https://www.dallasisd.org/timetolearn> and <https://www.dallasisd.org/esser>

mainstream educational setting (37.3%) or resource rooms (28.9%).

Teacher Characteristics

- A total of 1,774 SPED teachers and SPED teaching assistants (TAs) were employed in Dallas ISD in 2021-22 (5.2% increase from 2020-21).
- A smaller percentage of SPED teachers were Hispanic (11.2%) compared to SPED TAs (41.7%) and general education teachers (41.3%).
- A higher percentage of SPED teachers and TAs were African American (56% and 52.1%, respectively) compared to general education teachers (31.1%).

What were the campus staff perceptions and experiences with the SPED department?

Perceptions About Student Support Teams

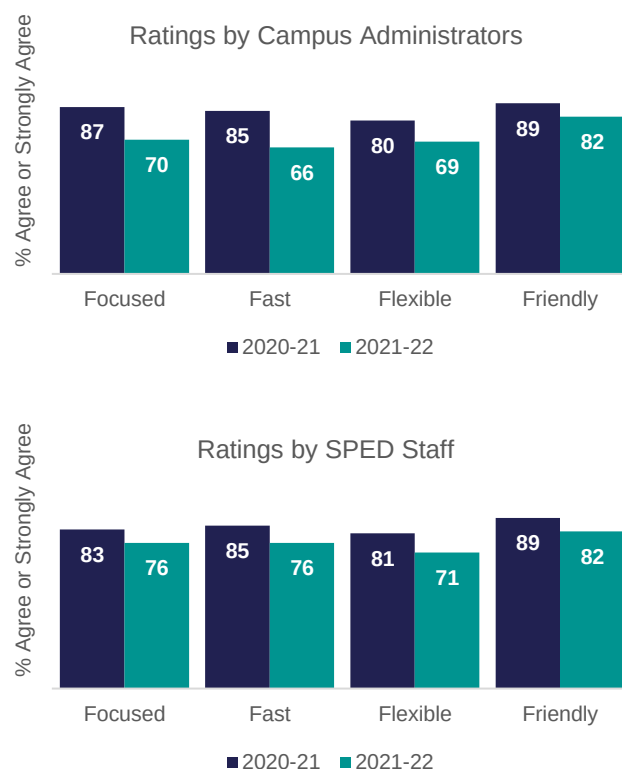
The purpose of the SPED Customer Service survey was to solicit feedback on customer service experience with the SPED department as well as explore respondents understanding of SPED policy, procedures, and resource access.

- A higher proportion of administrators (73.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that their SSTs met regularly to discuss student concerns compared to SPED staff (46.7%).
- A higher proportion of campus administrators (66.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that SSTs met regularly specifically to discuss, recommend, and review progress on appropriate interventions before referring students for an initial SPED evaluation compared to SPED staff (45.4%)
- Survey findings indicated a low rate of SPED staff awareness of the presence and activities of campus SSTs.
- Most campus administrators and SPED staff respondents agreed that they 1) understood the district's expectations in providing SPED services, 2) understood the district's SPED policies and procedures, 3) understood how to get help with SPED-related matters, 4) had adequate access to SPED central staff members needed to provide SPED services, and 5) had adequate access to the classroom materials needed to serve SPED students.

SPED Core 4 Ratings

Ratings of the SPED department on all Core 4 domains were generally positive (Figure 1), however overall satisfaction ratings show a marked decrease from 2020-21 satisfaction ratings.

Figure 1: 2020-21 and 2021-22 SPED Customer Service Survey Ratings on Central Office SPED Department Core 4



Source: 2020-21 SPED Customer Service Surveys. 2021-22 SPED Customer Service Survey results file dated July 20, 2022.

Note: Administrator N=172 (2020-21), N=119 (2021-22), SPED Staff N=521 (2020-21), N=208 (2021-22).

What were the academic outcomes of students with disabilities?

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

- Students receiving SPED services were within one percentage point or exceeded 2020-21 rates for STAAR Reading and English I and English II EOCs at the Approaches+ performance standard (Table 2).
- Except for grades three and five, students receiving SPED services in 2021-22 exceeded 2020-21 rates for STAAR Mathematics and Algebra I EOC at the Approaches+ performance standard.
- Students in 2021-22 were within one percentage point or exceeded 2020-21 rates for grades three through seven STAAR Alt 2 Reading at the Satisfactory+ performance standard.
- Students were within one percentage point or exceeded 2020-21 rates at the Satisfactory+ performance standard for all STAAR Alt 2 Mathematics and Algebra I EOC Alt 2, with the exception of grade six.

Table 2. 2021-22 Dallas ISD SPED Students at Approaches+ on STAAR 3-8/STAAR EOC

Grade Level	2021-22	
	Tested N	Appr+ %
Reading		
Grade 3	1,045	32.3
Grade 4	1,167	32.3
Grade 5	1,221	38.2
Grade 6	1,097	25.3
Grade 7	1,032	31.0
Grade 8	916	37.2
Mathematics		
Grade 3	1,047	31.0
Grade 4	1,170	33.2
Grade 5	1,224	42.6
Grade 6	1,092	36.4
Grade 7	662	19.2
Grade 8	1,205	33.6
Science		
Grade 5	1,222	26.4
Grade 8	968	29.1
Social Studies		
Grade 8	915	18.9
EOC		
Algebra I	1,258	38.9
English I	1,549	19.2
English II	1,049	20.3
Biology	1,085	45.0
U.S. History	650	51.8

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file dated 07/15/22 and STAAR EOC data file dated 08/02/22.

Table 3. 2021-22 Dallas ISD SPED Students at Satisfactory+ on STAAR 3-8 Alt 2/STAAR EOC Alt 2

Grade Level	2021-22	
	Tested N	Satis+ %
Reading		
Grade 3	232	86.6
Grade 4	233	90.1
Grade 5	231	87.9
Grade 6	208	89.4
Grade 7	209	89.5
Grade 8	199	91.0
Mathematics		
Grade 3	232	92.2
Grade 4	232	95.7
Grade 5	231	93.5
Grade 6	208	88.0
Grade 7	210	92.9
Grade 8	199	92.5
Science		
Grade 5	231	93.1
Grade 8	199	93.5
Social Studies		
Grade 8	199	92.0
EOC		
Algebra I	207	88.4
English I	203	86.7
English II	197	82.7
Biology	212	94.8
U.S. History	179	92.7

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file dated 08/09/22. District STAAR EOC data file dated 08/02/22.

Comparisons to Statewide Results

- Students receiving SPED services at the statewide level outperformed students receiving SPED services within Dallas ISD in nearly all STAAR 3-8/STAAR EOC subjects and grade levels
- Students receiving SPED services within Dallas ISD outperformed students receiving SPED services statewide by two percentage points in Grade 8 Mathematics.

NWEA Measures of Academic Progress

- Students receiving SPED services in grades one, two, four, and eight had higher rates of Average Conditional Growth Percentiles (CGPs) on the MAP Reading test than on the MAP Mathematics test while students in grades three, five, six, nine, ten, and eleven had higher CGPs rates on the MAP Mathematics test than on the MAP Reading test.

What were the attendance rates, graduation rates, and dropout rates of students with disabilities?

- In 2021-22, the overall average attendance rate for students receiving SPED services (90.9%) was slightly less than the overall district average attendance rate (91.6%). However, the overall average attendance rate for students receiving SPED services has declined since 2020-21 (92.0%) and 2019-20 (93.1%).
- For the Class of 2021, students receiving SPED services graduation rate (68.8%) was markedly less than the districtwide graduation rate (80.1%).
- The 4-year longitudinal dropout rate for the Class of 2021 students with disabilities was 14.9 compared to districtwide rate of 12.9.

What were the outcomes related to ESSER funded Special Education activities?

SPED Compensatory Services

- The SPED Compensatory Services ESSER activity implementation was delayed due to late job postings and a lack of qualified job candidates. As such, the Dallas ISD Deaf Education program did not meet the goal of providing sign language interpreters to 100% of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and use sign language, in their content classes, electives and activities.
- The SPED department did not meet the goal of completing 100% of compensatory speech therapy services owed to students as defined by the ARD committee by the end of the students' annual IEP.

SPED Backlog Clean-up

- The SPED department met the goal of completing 100% of all backlogged referral cases from 2017-2019 by September 15, 2021.
- The SPED department made significant progress towards but did not meet the goal of completing 100% of all current 2021-2022 school year referrals with finalized FIE by August 1, 2022.

Transforming SPED Classrooms & Pathways

The Transforming SPED Classrooms and Pathways ESSER activity implementation was delayed due to late purchasing of a new curriculum, late submission of procurement requisitions, and a lack of progress toward purchasing additional materials and classroom technologies. High school Functional Living Skills Classes did not meet the goal of implementing a revised program.

SPED Behavioral Health Team

The SPED Behavioral Health Team ESSER activity implementation was delayed due to delays in posting job openings, difficulty finding qualified candidates, and a late onboarding process for Behavioral Health Team staff. As such, the goal was not met to conduct a needs assessment for all campuses to determine behavioral supports for students with disabilities.

Middle School ARD Support

- In 2021-22, the SPED department aimed to provide intentional support systems for ten middle school campuses that have more than 100 students receiving SPED services with mild to severe needs.
- The SPED department did not meet the goal (missed 1.9% of ARD timelines) of having 100% of ARD meetings completed on or before the due dates as evidenced by SDMS reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to communicate and stress to all campuses the importance of regular SST meetings for the identification of students needing services. Thirty-three percent of SPED staff were not aware of an SST on their campuses or did not have enough information to rate their SST, suggesting possible under-engagement of SPED staff members in SST campus activities (this rate decreased from 38% in 2020-21). Program managers and school leadership should increase communication and stress the crucial role that regular SST meetings play in the effective and efficient delivery of SPED services.

Continue to monitor the impact of SPED department ESSER activities. In 2021-22, district budgeted approximately \$29 million aimed at improving and expanding special education services. The SPED department met the goal of completing 100% of all backlogged referral cases from 2017-2019 and made significant progress toward the goal of completing referrals

with finalized FIE and conducting ARD meetings in a timely manner. However, many of the ESSER activities were not fully implemented due to delays in job posting, hiring, and onboarding process of qualified language interpreters and Behavioral Health Team staff or due to late procurement process for purchasing new curriculum and materials. Therefore, as these activities are implemented in 2022-23, the district should monitor these activities to examine the impact on SPED services and student outcomes.

Evaluate the impact of alternative school calendars on student outcomes. To help mitigate learning loss and further support students, the Dallas ISD Board of Trustees adopted three calendars (traditional, Intersession, and School Day Redesign) for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. In 2021-22, forty-one campuses implemented the intersession school year calendar, five campuses implemented the school day redesign school year calendar, and the remaining campuses implemented the traditional school year calendar. Program evaluators should examine the impact of these initiatives on learning outcomes of students receiving SPED services.

REFERENCES

- 2021 Results-Driven Accountability Report (2020). Retrieved 15 February from <https://rptsrv1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker>
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