

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In spring 2021, to help mitigate learning loss due to the COVID pandemic and further support students, the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) Board of Trustees adopted three school calendars (traditional, Intersession, and School Day Redesign) for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years. The Intersession and School Day Redesign (SDR) programs were extended year calendar programs designed to help students receive extra support through increased learning time that target student academic and nonacademic outcomes. The majority of Dallas ISD campuses implemented the traditional school calendar, while forty-one campuses implemented the Intersession calendar, and five campuses implemented the SDR calendar. The goal in implementing the Intersession calendar was to provide more time for teachers to collaborate and prepare, as well as more time for enrichment and acceleration for students.

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the context, process, and outcomes for the Intersession program so that program managers could assess the implementation of program components and operations, determine effectiveness, and plan future efforts. The total budget for the 2021-22 Extended School Year programs (School Day Redesign and Intersession programs) was \$24,350,000. This budget was funded through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant¹.

To improve the validity of the evaluation and control for confounding influences on outcomes, the evaluator selected two comparison groups: campuses that most resembled campuses participating in the Intersession program, and students that most resembled students who attended Intersession programming.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

How was the Intersession program implemented?

Calendar Selection Process

Program management designed a school selection process for extended year learning based on both stakeholder interest and student need.

- In fall 2020, the program managers surveyed teachers and families to gauge campus and community interest in the adoption of new calendars.
- To ensure the campus had conducted extensive community engagement outreach, campus leaders were required to send notes home with students explaining the campus was considering a new calendar,

send automated calls or text messages to families, send emails or other notes from teachers to families, add information directly to their campus websites, add extended year as an agenda item to upcoming Parent Teacher Association meetings, and post information on social media.

- Campus principals were also required to sign a letter of intent confirming the final decision.

Program Characteristics

Schools utilizing the Intersession calendar maintained the school day start and end times, in alignment with the base calendar, but began the school year on August 9, 2021, and ended the school year on June 23, 2022.²

- The extended calendar added five non-compulsory Intersession weeks to the school year.
- During Intersession weeks, up to half of students at participating campuses were invited to attend Tuesday through Friday for targeted enrichment and remediation.
- Content presented during Intersession weeks covered all core content areas but had a primary focus on a lead content area based on each week's theme

Students were invited to participate in the Intersession weeks if they met certain academic and non-academic criteria. During Intersession weeks, students had opportunities for more personalized attention in smaller groups, while teachers benefited from additional planning time on Monday of every Intersession week to plan differentiated experiences.

What were the demographic characteristics of students and teachers who participated in the Intersession program?

Students

- In 2021-22, there were a total of 20,434 students at Intersession program campuses.
- The majority of Intersession students were Hispanic (65%) or African American (30%) and nearly all students were identified as economically disadvantaged (94%).
- A large proportion of Intersession students were identified as EB (50%), and 10% of Intersession students received Special Education services.

¹ The ESSER grant program is authorized in Title VIII, Division B, of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was signed into federal law in March 2020.

² Base calendar campuses began school on August 16 and ended on May 27.

- Comparison campus student demographics were similar across all categories (within five percentage points or fewer).

Teachers

- In 2021-22, there were 1,310 teachers on Intersession campuses and 1,400 teachers on comparison campuses.
- The majority of Intersession campus teachers and comparison campus teachers were African American (41% and 37%, respectively) or Hispanic (38% and 40%, respectively).

What were the attendance rates of students who participated in the Intersession program?

- In 2021-22, students attending Intersession had an average attendance rate of 93.0 percent and comparison students had an average attendance rate of 93.2 percent.
- In 2021-22, Intersession campuses had an average attendance rate of 91.5 percent and comparison campuses had an average attendance rate of 92.6 percent.

What were student, teacher, staff, and parent perceptions of the Intersession program?

Student Survey

Overall, 3,644 respondents completed the student perception survey in November, and 2,262 in June. When asked,

- “Has your new calendar helped you feel more prepared for your schoolwork?”, 88 percent of students responded that the program “has helped some” or “helped a lot.”
- “Has Intersession week been fun for you?” over half of the students (83%) reported that they “enjoyed it” that “it was very fun!”
- “Tell us what you liked about the new calendar,” “extra time to be with friends,” and “more help from my teachers” were the most given responses.

Teacher Survey

In November 2021, 297 respondents from all Intersession campuses completed the teacher perception survey and 247 respondents from all Intersession campuses completed the second administration of the teacher perception survey in June 2022. When asked,

- Their “top reason for choosing to work during Intersession,” in November was because the “students needed the extra support”. In June, the top reasons given were both that “students needed the extra support” and “the extra compensation” (43% each).
- “The best part of Intersession week” was the “relaxed environment with less pressure and no testing” (40%, in November; 44% in June).
- “Has Intersession been beneficial to the students who have attended?” 88 percent of November responses

and 82 percent of June responses indicated that “it has benefited students some” or “it has greatly benefited students.”

- “Have you noticed any academic changes in these students?” 94 percent of November respondents and 85 percent of June respondents responded “yes.”
- “Have you noticed any social emotional changes in these students?” 79 percent of November respondents and 72 percent of June respondents responded “yes.”

Staff and Leadership Survey

Overall, 227 respondents from all Intersession campuses completed the staff and leadership perception survey. When asked,

- To rate “the BEST part of Intersession week,” the respondents’ top rated statements were the “relaxed environment with students and colleagues (i.e., less pressure, no testing, no evaluation),” (53%) and the “planning time (i.e., Monday and daily planning periods)” (23%).
- “What is ONE word that describes your Intersession experience with your school’s new schedule?”, the most common responses given were “great” and “good.”
- “What is the biggest thing to improve for future Intersession weeks?” 35 percent of respondents selected “the preparation and communication leading up to Intersession week,” while 28 percent chose improving “student attendance.”

Parent Survey

Overall, 1,520 parents from all Intersession campuses completed the parent perception survey. When asked,

- To “rate your overall satisfaction with the new calendar,” 87 percent of parents reported an average or above overall level of satisfaction.
- To rate their level of agreement with several statements, the majority of parents (80%) felt that the program “has created a positive educational opportunity for their student” and 63 percent of parents had “noticed positive social emotional changes in my students since attending Intersession.”
- “What changes that you would like to see us make to the Intersession program?” the most common theme given was improving communication from the school. Both “improving communication of whether my student is invited” and “better understanding what students are doing during the extra week” were suggested as improvements to communication from schools.

What impact did participation in the Intersession calendar have on instructional practices?

When asked how the following facets of your teaching practice compare to previous years: instructional planning competency, the way they delivered instructional content, the way they monitored student progress, their ability to imbed interventions into their teaching, and their ability to include SEL practices:

- The majority of teachers who indicated that participation in the program had an impact on their instructional practices reported that the impact had been a positive one.
- The facets with the largest rates of positive responses included SEL and imbedding interventions into teaching. Over three-fourths of responding teachers (78%) reported that the program had “somewhat” or “significantly improved” these facets.
- In addition, 75 percent of teachers reported that the program had “somewhat” or “significantly improved” the way they delivered instructional content.

What impact did participation in the Intersession calendar have on student achievement?

MAP Growth Assessments

- Overall, 2021-22 EOY MAP results showed that Intersession students demonstrated higher rates of high average or high EOY growth in Reading – English, Reading – Spanish, and Mathematics than comparison students (Table 1).

Table 1: 2021-22 Intersession and Comparison Student MAP End-of-Year Growth Quintile Rates

Group	Dosage	High Average or High	
		<i>n</i>	%
	Reading (English)		
Intersession	Low	739	30.1
	Moderate	458	33.1
	High	206	34.6
	Overall	1,403	31.6
Comparison		1,368	30.8
	Reading (Spanish)		
Intersession	Low	386	35.1*
	Moderate	223	37.2*
	High	111	32.5*
	Overall	720	35.2*
Comparison		590	28.9
	Mathematics		
Intersession	Low	1,310	33.9
	Moderate	850	38.8*
	High	420	39.6*
	Overall	2,580	36.2
Comparison		2,454	34.5

Source: District MAP data file dated 06/22/22.

Note: *Statistically significant. Intersession dosage groups scoring higher than the comparison students are in **bold**. Includes data for students who had valid MAP scores for all three administrations in the same language.

- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Reading – Spanish, indicating that students who attended all dosages of Intersession were more likely to demonstrate higher levels of growth on the MAP Reading – Spanish assessment than comparison students.
- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Mathematics, indicating that students who attended moderate or high dosages of Intersession were more

likely to demonstrate higher levels of growth on the MAP Mathematics assessment than comparison students.

- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Reading – English, Reading – Spanish, and Mathematics, indicating that students who attended Intersession campuses were more likely to demonstrate higher performance on the MAP assessments than students who attended comparison campuses.
- Overall, 2021-22 EOY MAP results showed that Intersession students demonstrated higher rates of met projected growth in Reading – English, Reading – Spanish, and Mathematics than comparison students (Table 2).

Table 2: 2021-22 Intersession and Comparison Student MAP BOY to EOY Met Projected Growth

Group	Dosage	Met Project Growth	
		<i>n</i>	%
	Reading (English)		
Intersession	Low	994	40.5
	Moderate	600	43.3*
	High	261	43.8*
	Overall	1,855	41.8*
Comparison		1,817	41.0
	Reading (Spanish)		
Intersession	Low	529	48.0*
	Moderate	289	47.7*
	High	145	42.4*
	Overall	963	47.1*
Comparison		814	39.8
	Mathematics		
Intersession	Low	1,775	45.9
	Moderate	1,082	49.4*
	High	521	49.1*
	Overall	3,378	47.4*
Comparison		3,325	46.7

Source: District MAP data file dated 06/22/22.

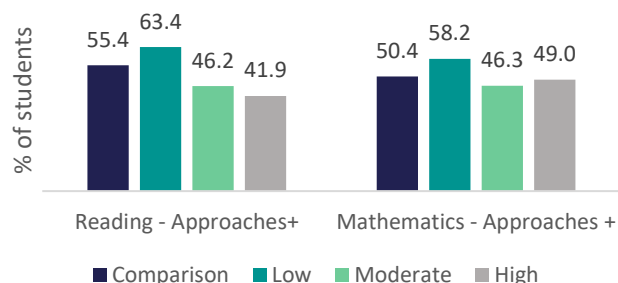
Note: * Statistically significant. Intersession dosage groups scoring higher than the comparison students are in **bold**. Includes data for students who had valid MAP scores for all three administrations in the same language.

- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Reading – Spanish, indicating that students who attended low or moderate dosages of Intersession were more likely to meet or exceed projected growth on the MAP Reading – Spanish assessment than comparison students.
- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Mathematics, indicating that students who attended moderate or high dosages of Intersession were more likely to meet or exceed projected growth on the MAP Mathematics assessment than comparison students.
- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Reading – English, Reading – Spanish, and Mathematics, indicating that students who attended Intersession campuses were more likely to meet or exceed projected growth on the MAP assessments than students who attended comparison campuses.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

- Overall, Intersession students had higher rates of achieving the Approaches+ performance standard in Mathematics compared to the comparison students.
- At all grade levels, the low dosage group of Intersession students had higher rates of achieving the Approaches+ performance standard in Reading and Mathematics (Figure 1) compared to other dosage groups and the comparison students.

Figure 1: 2021-22 Intersession and Comparison Student STAAR Performance Standard Rates



Source: District STAAR files dated 07/15/22 (grades three to eight) for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date of 11/01/21.

- In Grades 5 and 7, the high dosage group of Intersession students had higher rates of achieving the Approaches+ performance standard in Mathematics compared to the comparison students.
- A statistically significant relationship was found for STAAR 3-8 Reading and Mathematics, indicating that students who attended low dosages of Intersession were more likely to achieve the Approaches+ performance standard than comparison students.
- Overall, rates of students at the Approaches+, Meets+, and Masters performance standards were lower in Intersession campuses compared to comparison campuses in Reading but higher in Mathematics.
- A statistically significant relationship was found for STAAR 3-8 Mathematics, indicating that students who attended Intersession campuses were more likely to achieve the Approaches+ than students who attended comparison campuses.

State Accountability Ratings

In 2021-22, possible accountability ratings included: A, B, C, and Not Rated: SB 1365. The Not Rated: SB 1365 ratings

were given to campuses who earned overall scaled scores less than 70.

- Three Intersession campuses received an accountability rating of A, compared to zero comparison campuses.
- A total of 19 Intersession campuses received an accountability rating of B, compared to 24 comparison campuses, while four Intersession campuses and five comparison campuses were labeled Not Rated: SB 1365.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to monitor the impact of the Intersession program on student academic outcomes. In 2021-22, students attending Intersession campuses were more likely to achieve Approaches+ on the STAAR Mathematics and demonstrate higher performance and to meet or exceed projected growth on the MAP Reading and Mathematics assessments compared to students who attended comparison campuses. District leadership and program managers should continue to monitor the persistence of the positive impact the Intersession program has on student academic achievement following the second year of implementation.

Examine the impact of the longer school year on summer learning loss. Traditionally, studies (Kidron and Lindsay, 2014) have shown that students lose academic knowledge over the course of long summer breaks. However, campuses participating in the Intersession program continued classroom instruction until June 23, 2022, and the next school year began August 8, 2022, resulting in a much shorter summer break. District leadership and program managers should examine Fall 2022 BOY MAP Growth results to determine if the shortened summer for Intersession students had an impact on student academic achievement compared to students with the traditional, longer summer break.

Emphasize the importance of clear communication about Intersession to families. When asked for suggestions to improve the program, 22 percent of responding parents (38 of 173) indicated a greater need for communication from campuses regarding whether their child was invited to attend, which weeks Intersession would take place, and what activities were planned during these weeks. Program management should prioritize guidance to campuses on clear communication to families utilizing multiple channels.

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