

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 (Maple Lawn, H.I. Holland at Lisbon, and Edna Rowe Elementary Schools, and Thomas J. Rusk and Boude Storey Middle Schools). The goal in implementing the School Day Redesign 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 SDR 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 comparison campuses that most resembled campuses participating in the SDR program. Campuses selected for inclusion in the comparison group were Webster, Bursleson, and Blair Elementary Schools, and Walker and Browne Middle Schools.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

How was the SDR 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 SDR calendar maintained the school day start and end times, in alignment with the base calendar, but began the school year on August 2, 2021, and ended the school year on June 23, 2022.²

- The extended calendar added 23 additional instructional days to the school.
- Redesign Calendar 2³ featured designated "Redesign Days" on Wednesdays, which occurred about twice a month.
- Redesign Days were early release days for students, with teacher planning or professional development scheduled for the second half of the day.

In general, SDR campus activities did not differ from base calendar campuses because they implemented the same instructional curriculum. In May 2022, SDR campuses completed the normal instructional curricula, as base calendar campuses concluded their school year. As a result, SDR campuses utilized four weeks of content from the Dallas ISD-developed Intersession curriculum during the month of June. To address the unique needs of students in their schools, program management empowered campuses to customize the ways they used their added time.

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

Students

- In 2021-22, there were a total of 2,316 students at SDR program campuses.
- The majority of SDR students were Hispanic (60%) or African American (35%) and nearly all students were identified as economically disadvantaged (93%).

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.

³ Both middle schools selected this calendar.

- A large proportion of SDR students were identified as EB (46%), and 13% of SDR students received Special Education services.
- Comparison campus student demographics were similar across all categories (within two percentage points or fewer).

Teachers

- In 2021-22, there were 151 teachers on SDR campuses and 163 teachers on comparison campuses.
- The majority of SDR campus teachers and comparison campus teachers were African American (48% and 55%, respectively) or Hispanic (26% and 31%, respectively).

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

- In 2021-22, SDR campuses had an average attendance rate of 90 percent and comparison campuses had an average attendance rate of 92 percent.
- Overall, two of the five (40%) SDR campuses and four out of five (80%) of comparison campuses exceeded the overall district attendance rate (90%).

What were principal perceptions of the SDR implementation?

- Overall, all SDR principals reported that at the end of June, they felt *"tired"*, both mentally, and physically.
- Three principals expressed that the feeling had recently *"hit them"*, as they entered the final week or two of the school year.
- When asked what the biggest challenge had been to implement the new program, keeping up *"morale"* and *"motivation"* was a common theme.
- Principals indicated that implementing the program was a new challenge for everyone, from administrators to students, with the final month being the biggest hurdle. *"It feels like we are supposed to be done,"* one shared.
- Principals shared that when students came back to school after a long break from face-to-face learning, many returned needing to hone their social skills or remember basic classroom procedures. Others returned to campus facing profound emotional impacts after losing loved ones to COVID-19.
- Principals understood this to be an opportunity for school to become a place of comforting consistency, and focused their efforts on preserving campus celebrations, traditions, and culture while emphasizing SEL.
- Principals explained that the program benefited teachers via added compensation, expanded time to grow their skills, and an enhanced focus on data and progress monitoring. They also felt that the beginning of year Redesign Days offered valuable extra time to plan and collaborate. However, they were keenly aware of teachers feeling *"overwhelmed"* and *"burned out"* by the extended year.

- When asked what changes to the program they were planning for the upcoming school year, the principals all planned to improve the ways they used planning days.

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

Student Survey

Overall, 429 respondents completed the student perception survey. When asked,

- "How do you feel" about the new school calendar, 22 percent ($n = 96$) of the students indicated that they "like it" while 41 percent of students ($n = 176$) responded that they "don't like it."
- "Has your new calendar helped you feel more prepared for your school work?", 44 percent ($n = 183$) of students responded that the program "has helped some" or "helped a lot" while 28 percent ($n = 118$) reported that "it didn't make any difference."
- "Have the additional Redesign Days been fun for you?" over half of the students (53%, $n = 219$) 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," ($n = 56$) and "more time to learn/time to catch up with content" ($n = 17$) were the most given responses.
- "Tell us about what you did not like about the new calendar" was having a shortened summer vacation ($n = 83$). One student remarked, *"we started school first, and we still get out last. It doesn't seem fair."*

Teacher Survey

In January 2022, 103 respondents from all SDR campuses completed the teacher perception survey and 77 respondents from all SDR campuses completed the second administration of the teacher perception survey in June 2022. When asked,

- "What is ONE word that describes your experience with your school's new schedule?", the most common response given in January was *"exhausted,"* or *"exhausting."* Similarly, on the June survey, The most common responses given were *"exhausted," "tired,"* and *"long."*
- "Do you feel that the new calendar has had an impact on the amount of stress you feel about your job?" with 73 percent ($n = 66$) of January teacher responses and 78 percent ($n = 49$) of June teacher responses indicating that the program had increased their stress level "somewhat" or "significantly."
- "Do you feel that the new calendar has allowed you more time" for various activities, most teachers (In January, 58 and 59%, respectively; in June, 60% for each) stated that they had more time for "small group" and "SEL instruction." In January, 44 percent of teachers (46% in June) stated that they had more time to "differentiate or individualize instruction to meet their students' needs."

Staff and Leadership Survey

Overall, 38 respondents from all SDR campuses completed the staff and leadership perception survey. When asked,

- To rate “the BEST part of your school’s new schedule,” the respondents (25%, $n = 6$ of 24) top rated statements were the “additional planning time for teachers,” and the “additional time spent with students”.
- “What is ONE word that describes your experience with your school’s new schedule?” the most common response given was “overwhelming.”
- “What do you feel has been the biggest challenge to implementing the new calendar?” staff and campus leaders expressed that the biggest challenge to implementing the program was sustaining “motivation.” Several survey respondents ($n = 7$) explained that implementation of the program during an ongoing pandemic created additional, unique challenges.

Parent Survey

Overall, 272 parents from all SDR campuses completed the parent perception survey. When asked,

- To “rate your overall satisfaction with the new calendar,” 78 percent ($n = 186$) of parents reported an average or above overall level of satisfaction.
- To rate their level of agreement with several statements, the majority of parents (62%) felt that the program “has created a positive educational opportunity for their student” and 59 percent of parents had “noticed positive social emotional changes in my students since attending a School Day Redesign campus this year.”
- In contrast to responses from SDR teachers, 41 percent ($n = 79$) of parents reported that the program “somewhat reduced” or “significantly reduced” the “impact on the amount of stress your family feels about school.”

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

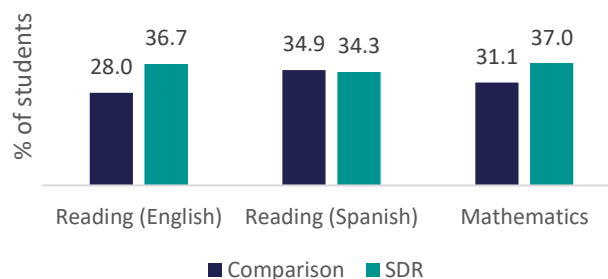
- When asked whether the increase in planning time that came with the new calendar had led to an increase in the quality of their teaching practice, in January, about half of teachers (49%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that it had. In June, 39 percent “strongly agreed” or “agreed”.
- About half of surveyed teachers (51%) also “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the increased collaboration among teachers had led to an increase in the quality of lessons in January. In June, 41 percent “strongly agreed” or “agreed”.
- Overall, 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 items with the largest rates of positive response were instructional planning competency and instructional presentation or delivery.

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

MAP Growth Assessments

- Overall, 2021-22 EOY MAP results showed that SDR students demonstrated higher rates of high average or high EOY growth in Reading – English (nine percentage points) and Mathematics (six percentage points) than comparison campus students (Figure 1).
- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Reading – English and Mathematics, indicating that students who attended SDR campuses were more likely to demonstrate higher performance on the MAP assessments than students who attended comparison campuses.

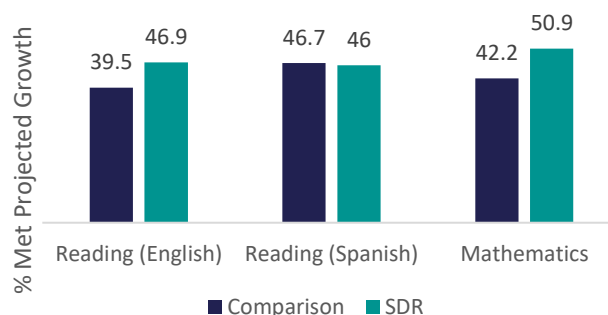
Figure 1: 2021-22 SDR and Comparison Campus MAP EOY Growth Quintiles Rates at High Average or High, by Subject



Source: District EOY MAP data file date of 06/22/22.

- Similarly, 2021-22 EOY MAP results showed that SDR students demonstrated higher rates of met or exceeded growth in Reading – English (seven percentage points) and Mathematics (nine percentage points) than comparison campus students (Figure 2).
- A statistically significant relationship was found for MAP Reading – English and Mathematics, indicating that students who attended SDR campuses were more likely to meet or exceed projected growth on the MAP assessments than students who attended comparison campuses.

Figure 2: 2021-22 SDR and Comparison Campus MAP BOY to EOY Met Projected Growth Rates, by Subject

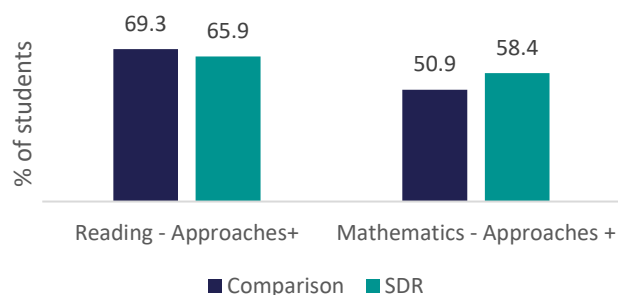


Source: District EOY MAP data file date of 06/22/22.

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

- Overall, rates of students at the Approaches+, Meets+, and Masters performance standards were lower in SDR campuses compared to comparison campuses in Reading, but higher in Mathematics.
- A statistically significant relationship was found for STAAR Reading, indicating that students who attended SDR campuses were less likely to achieve Approaches+ on the STAAR Reading than students who attended comparison campuses (Figure 3).
- A statistically significant relationship was found for STAAR Mathematics, indicating that students who attended SDR campuses were more likely to achieve Approaches+ on the STAAR Mathematics than students who attended comparison campuses.

Figure 3: 2021-22 Percentage of Students Attaining STAAR Approaches+ Performance Standard for School Day Redesign and Comparison Campuses – Reading and Mathematics



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

State Accountability Ratings

In 2021-22, possible 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.

- All five of the School Day Redesign campuses received a 2022 accountability rating of B.
- Three of the five comparison campuses (60%) received a 2022 accountability rating of C, while the remaining two received a B.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue to monitor the impact of the SDR program on student academic outcomes. In 2021-22, students attending SDR campuses were more likely to achieve Approaches+ on the STAAR Reading and Mathematics and demonstrate higher performance on the MAP Reading – English and MAP Mathematics compared to students who attended comparison campuses. District leadership and program managers should continue to monitor the persistence of the positive impact the School Day Redesign calendar 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 SDR program continued classroom instruction until June 23, 2022, and the next school year began August 1, 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 School Day Redesign students had an impact on student academic achievement compared to students with the traditional, longer summer break.

Create new curriculum for June, specific to SDR campuses. In May 2022, SDR campuses completed the normal instructional curricula. As a result, SDR campuses utilized the Dallas ISD-developed Intersession curriculum during June of the first year of implementation. District leadership and program managers should develop a curriculum for the month of June that is tailored to the needs of SDR students. Such curriculum would optimize the learning experience of students while creating a unique and valuable asset to the program.

Explore options to mitigate teacher fatigue. Teachers described their experiences with the extended year calendar this year as “exhausting.” Over 70 percent of teachers reported that the program had increased their stress level “somewhat” or “significantly.” District leadership and program managers should explore options, through research of best practices and stakeholder feedback, to alleviate teacher stress and fatigue resulting from the extended school year.

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