

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.

The purpose of this evaluation is to examine the SPED program in 2022-23, including a) funding, b) characteristics of the students served by the program, c) SPED program teacher characteristics, d) SPED staff and campus administrator satisfaction with support provided by the SPED department, and e) student academic performance and outcomes. This evaluation gives particular focus on examining indicators related to state and federal accountability systems.

Program Components

Special Education Campus Staff

In 2022-23, a total of 1,704 SPED teachers and SPED teaching assistants were employed in Dallas ISD (N = 904 and N = 800 respectively). Approximately three-quarters (74.1%) of SPED teachers and teaching assistants in the district were female. A smaller proportion of SPED teachers and teaching assistants were Hispanic (28.5%) compared to general education teachers (42.6%), while a larger proportion of SPED teachers and teaching assistants were African American (53.2%) compared to general education teachers (33.0%). The average length of teaching experience in the Dallas ISD for SPED teachers was 8.8 years, which was slightly higher than for general education teachers (7.9 years).

Budget

The total budget for the 2022-23 SPED program was \$135,895,241, which is a decrease from \$142,326,859 in 2021-22. The SPED department also received additional Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding which totaled \$9,592,397.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS/OUTCOMES

EQ1: How was the Special Education program implemented in 2022-23?

Student Characteristics

- In 2022-23, 16,803 students with disabilities (12.1% of district enrollment) received SPED services, compared to 15,762 in 2021-22 (Table 1).
- The number of students served by the SPED program has increased each year since 2014 (7.3% to 12.1% of district overall enrollment).

- A higher percentage of Black or African American students received SPED services (25.3%) relative to their representation in general education.
- Approximately two-thirds of students receiving SPED services were male (65.4%), while males and females were equally represented in the general education population.
- Emergent Bilingual (EB) students constituted 44.1 percent of students receiving SPED services.

Table 1: 2022-23 Dallas ISD SPED and General Education Enrollment by Student Group

	SPED (N=16,803)		General Education (N=122,555)	
	n	%	n	%
Sex				
Female	5,808	34.6	62,581	51.1
Male	10,995	65.4	59,965	48.9
Ethnicity				
Hispanic/Latino	11,243	66.9	87,990	71.8
Black or Afr Amer	4,255	25.3	23,626	19.3
White	846	5.0	6,758	5.5
Other	459	2.7	4,181	3.4
Student Groups				
Eco. Dis.	14,550	86.6	102,889	84.0
EB	7,412	44.1	61,700	50.3
Homeless	391	2.3	2,722	2.2

Source: District student demographic data file dated 5/12/23 (2022-23).

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 (33.0%), autism (27.6%), other health impairment (11.5%), and speech impairments (12.1%).
- Among students with specific learning disabilities, 17 percent had speech impairment as a secondary disability. Among students with autism, 59 percent were also diagnosed with speech impairment as secondary disability.
- The largest percentage of students with disabilities receiving SPED services were placed into a mainstream educational setting (39.0%). Twenty-eight percent of students with disabilities received SPED services in Resource Rooms.

EQ2: What were the campus staff perceptions and experiences with the SPED department?

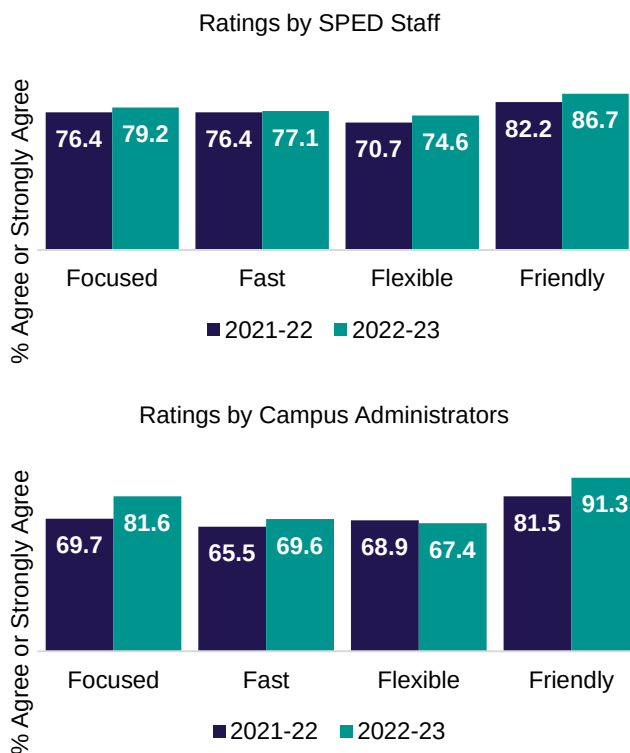
Perceptions About Student Support Teams

- Seventy-six percent of campus administrators and 55 percent of SPED staff agreed that campus SSTs met regularly to discuss student concerns.
- Seventy-five percent of campus administrators and 53 percent of SPED staff agreed that SSTs met regularly specifically to discuss, recommend, and review progress on appropriate interventions before referring students for an initial SPED evaluation.
- Survey findings indicated a low rate of SPED staff awareness of the presence and activities of campus SSTs.

SPED Core 4 Ratings

- Ratings of the SPED department on all Core 4 domains were generally positive (Figure 1), and overall satisfaction ratings show an increase from 2021-22 satisfaction ratings.

Figure 1: 2021-22 and 2022-23 SPED Customer Service Survey Ratings on Central Office SPED Department Core 4



Source: 2021-22 SPED Customer Service Surveys. 2022-23 SPED Customer Service Survey results file dated 8/15/23.

Note: SPED Staff $N = 208$ (2021-22), $N = 240$ (2022-23); Administrator $N = 119$ (2021-22), $N = 92$ (2022-23).

EQ3: How did the Special Education program perform on the 2021-22 RDA Report?

- Four SPED program areas were assigned a performance level (PL) of zero. Three SPED program areas received a PL of three or higher.
- The district did not outperform the state in any SPED program areas, and the district underperformed the state in four SPED program areas. Thirteen SPED

program areas were commensurate with state performance.

EQ4: What were the academic outcomes of special education students?

State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

- Overall, students with disabilities receiving SPED services performance at the Approaches Grade Level or Above (Approaches+) exceeded 2021-22 rates for all STAAR 3-8/STAAR EOC assessments.
- The largest increase in performance for students with disabilities receiving SPED services was found on the STAAR EOC Biology and U.S. History assessments (20.2 and 24.6 percentage points, respectively) (Table 2).
- Students with disabilities receiving SPED services performance at the Satisfactory or Above were within one percentage point or exceeded 2021-22 rates on all STAAR Alt 2 with the exception of grade five STAAR Alt 2 Reading and Mathematics.
- The largest increase in performance for students with disabilities receiving SPED services was found on the STAAR Alt 2 English II assessment (9.2 percentage points).

Table 2. 2022-23 Dallas ISD SPED Students at Approaches Grade Level or Above on STAAR 3-8 and STAAR EOC

Grade Level	Tested N	App+ %
Reading		
Grade 3	1,208	37.9
Grade 4	1,249	34.2
Grade 5	1,317	38.5
Grade 6	1,103	35.0
Grade 7	1,021	34.0
Grade 8	966	42.5
Mathematics		
Grade 3	1,208	40.6
Grade 4	1,250	35.4
Grade 5	1,322	57.0
Grade 6	1,098	46.2
Grade 7	356	21.9
Grade 8	1,441	45.1
Science		
Grade 5	1,323	30.2
Grade 8	1,047	37.5
Social Studies		
Grade 8	968	24.2
EOC		
Algebra I	1,566	52.1
English I	1,769	29.7
English II	1,329	28.2
Biology	1,290	65.2
U.S. History	743	76.4

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file dated 8/12/23 and STAAR EOC data file dated 8/12/23.

Note: App+ = Approaches Grade Level or Above.

- Students with disabilities receiving SPED services were within one percentage point or exceeded 2021-22 rates for all STAAR Alt 2 Reading exams and STAAR ALT 2 Algebra 1 at the Satisfactory+ performance standard, with the exception of grade 5 (Table 3).
- Students receiving SPED services were within one percentage point or exceeded 2021-22 rates at the Satisfactory+ performance standard for all STAAR Alt 2 Mathematics and Algebra I EOC, with the exception of grades four and five Mathematics.
- Students with disabilities receiving SPED services were within one percentage point or exceeded the 2021-22 rates at the Satisfactory+ performance standard for Grade 5 and 8 STAAR Alt 2 Science, while there was a decline in rates for STAAR Alt 2 Biology.
- Students exceeded the 2021-22 rates at the Satisfactory+ performance standard for grade eight STAAR Alt 2 Social Studies, however there was a decrease in rates of students at the Satisfactory+ performance standard for U.S. History EOC Alt 2.

Table 3. 2022-23 Dallas ISD SPED Students at Satisfactory or Above on the STAAR 3-8 Alt 2 and STAAR EOC Alt 2

Grade Level	Tested N	Satisfactory+ %
Reading		
Grade 3	234	86.3
Grade 4	234	89.7
Grade 5	238	85.7
Grade 6	219	90.9
Grade 7	197	92.9
Grade 8	202	95.5
Mathematics		
Grade 3	235	93.2
Grade 4	234	94.0
Grade 5	238	90.3
Grade 6	218	95.9
Grade 7	197	93.9
Grade 8	201	95.5
Science		
Grade 5	239	95.0
Grade 8	201	97.5
Social Studies		
Grade 8	200	95.5
EOC		
Algebra I	195	88.7
English I	191	90.1
English II	209	91.9
Biology	193	94.3
U.S. History	187	91.4

Source: District STAAR 3-8 data file dated 8/12/23. District STAAR EOC data file dated 8/12/23.

Note: Satisfactory+ = Satisfactory or Above.

Comparisons to Statewide Results

- Students receiving SPED services at the statewide level outperformed students receiving SPED services within Dallas ISD in all but six STAAR 3-8/STAAR EOC subjects and grade levels.
- Students receiving SPED services within Dallas ISD outperformed students receiving SPED services statewide in grades five and eight Mathematics, Algebra, English I, English II, and US History.

NWEA Measures of Academic Progress

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

EQ5: What were the attendance rates, graduation rates, and dropout rates of special education students?

- The overall attendance rate among students with disabilities (early childhood through grade 12) in 2022-23 was 92.2 (90.9% for 2021-22). General education students showed an overall attendance rate of 92.7 in 2022-23 (91.6% in 2021-22).
- For the Class of 2022, the SPED graduation rate was 70.0; the districtwide rate was 79.8.
- The 4-year longitudinal dropout rate for the Class of 2022 students with disabilities was 16.1 compared to districtwide rate of 15.1.
- The annual dropout rate for students receiving SPED services was 4.4 percent compared to the districtwide rate of 4.7 percent.

EQ6: What were the outcomes related to ESSER funded Special Education activities?

SPED Compensatory Services

- The Dallas ISD Deaf Education program did 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 meet the goal of providing 100% of compensatory speech therapy services owed to students by the end of the students' IEPs.

SPED Backlog Clean-up

- The SPED department met 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 SPED department met the goal of implementing a revised Functional Living Skills Classes that aims to increase student achievement on STAAR Alt 2 reading and math and increase student's independent living skills.

SPED Behavioral Health Team

- In 2022-23, a needs assessment was conducted for all campuses to determine behavioral supports for students with disabilities.
- There was significant progress towards the goal of having BCBAs train 100 percent of Special Educators on the development of positive behavior plans.

Middle School ARD Support

- The SPED department made significant progress towards the goal of having 100% of ARD meetings completed on or before the due dates as evidence by SDMS reports.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As recommended in previous years, continue to communicate and stress to all campuses the importance of regular SST meetings for the identification of students needing services. Approximately 30 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 33% in 2021-22). 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.

Monitor and investigate the impact of House Bill 3928 on implementation of Special Education services to students with disabilities. During the spring of 2023, the 88th Texas legislature passed House Bill (HB) 3928, in an effort to clarify instructional needs, evaluation and reporting for students with dyslexia as well as mandate additional requirements for multidisciplinary and admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committees. It is currently not known how these increased responsibilities mandated by HB 3928 will impact special education service provision to students with disabilities. Monitoring staff well-being and caseloads will allow the SPED department to identify and respond to SPED service disruptions so that SPED service provision to students is not negatively impacted.

REFERENCES

- 2022 Results-Driven Accountability Report (2022). Retrieved from <https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/monitoring-and-interventions/rda/results-driven-accountability-data-and-reports>.
- Mejan, M. C. (2021). 2020-21 Evaluation of the Special Education Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.
- Sands, K. (2022) 2021-22 Evaluation of SPED Program. Dallas, TX: Dallas Independent School District.

EA23-519-4

Kaitlin Sands, Ph.D., Evaluation Analyst I

©2023 Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD)

Mail a written request for permission to use or reproduce any part of this document to:

Dallas ISD Department of Evaluation and Assessment; 9400 N. Central Expressway, Dallas, TX, 75231.

An electronic version of this report and full 2021-22 report can be found at www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.

For more information, please contact Program Evaluation at evaluation@dallasisd.org.

