

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To help mitigate learning loss and further support students, the Dallas Independent School District (ISD) Board of Trustees adopted three school calendars (traditional, Intersession, and School Day Redesign¹) 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 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 program implementation, stakeholder perceptions, 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 2022-23 Extended School Year programs (Intersession and School Day Redesign programs) was \$24,332,375. This budget was funded through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant.²

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 AND RESULTS

How was the Intersession program implemented?

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 8, 2022, and ended the school year on June 23, 2023.³

- 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.

Teachers

- In 2022-23, there were 1,380 teachers on Intersession campuses and 1,453 teachers on comparison campuses.
- The majority of Intersession campus teachers and comparison campus teachers were African American (43% and 41%, respectively) or Hispanic (37% and 41%, respectively).

Students

- In 2022-23, there were a total of 19,545 students at Intersession program campuses.
- The majority of Intersession students were Hispanic (66%) or African American (29%) and nearly all students were identified as economically disadvantaged (94%).
- A large proportion of Intersession students were identified as EB (53%), and 13% of Intersession students received Special Education services.
- Comparison campus student demographics were similar across all categories (within five percentage points or fewer).

Student Attendance Rate

- In 2022-23, students attending Intersession had an average attendance rate of 93.5 percent (93.0% in 2021-22) and comparison students had an average attendance rate of 94.4 percent (93.2% in 2021-22).
- Intersession campuses had an average attendance rate of 92.9 percent (91.5% in 2021-22) and comparison campuses had an average attendance rate of 93.9 percent (92.6% in 2021-22).

¹ For additional details regarding the School Day Redesign calendar, see Watson (2022). www.dallasisd.org/Page/888.

² 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.

³ Base calendar campuses began school on August 15 and ended on May 26.

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

Student Surveys

Overall, 1,143 respondents completed the student perception survey.

- Eighty-one percent of students responded that the program “has helped some” or “helped a lot” with their schoolwork.
- Three-fourths of the students (75%) reported that they “enjoyed” Intersessions weeks or that “it was very fun!”
- “Extra time to be with friends,” and “more help from teachers” were what students liked most about the new calendar.

Teacher Surveys

In 2023, 573 respondents from all Intersession campuses completed the teacher perception survey.

- Forty-four teachers reported that their top reason for choosing to work during Intersession was because of the “extra compensation.”
- As the best part of Intersession weeks, teachers chose the “relaxed environment with less pressure and no testing” was what (44%).
- Seventy-one percent of teachers indicated that the extended calendar had benefited students “greatly” or “some”, a decrease of 10 percentage points from 2021-22.
- Seventy-one percent of surveyed teachers reported that they noticed academic changes in students who attended Intersessions, a decrease of 14 percentage points from 2022.
- Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported that they noticed social emotional changes in students who attended Intersessions, a four percentage points decrease from 2022.

Staff and Leadership Surveys

Overall, 231 respondents from all Intersession campuses completed the staff and leadership perception survey.

- Respondents indicated that the “relaxed environment with students and colleagues (i.e., less pressure, no testing, no evaluation),” (49%) and the “opportunities to build relationships with students” (16%) were the best part of their school extended calendar.
- The most commonly mentioned words provided by staff and campus leaders to describe their extended calendar experience were “long” and “good.”
- Staff and campus leaders mentioned “ensuring student attendance” and “participants’ motivation while preventing burnout” as the biggest challenges to implementing the new calendar.

Parent Surveys

Overall, 1,116 parents or guardians from all Intersession campuses completed the parent perception survey.

- When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the new calendar, 74 percent of parents reported an average or above overall level of satisfaction.
- Sixty-six percent of parents felt that the program had created a positive educational opportunity for their students and 63 percent of parents felt that their students enjoyed the Intersession experience.
- Parents' additional comments highlighted challenges related to increased family stress: (a) having numerous days out of school interrupted the learning process and required *ad hoc* daycare schedules; (b) challenges in organizing family vacations or custody arrangements during the summer; (c) facing logistical hurdles when dealing with multiple school calendars within a household; and (d) communication issues with campuses.

What impact did participation in the Intersession calendar have on instructional 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 instructional facets that improved the most were the incorporation of interventions into teaching (69%) and SEL practices (68%).
- Sixty-five percent of teachers reported that the program had “somewhat” or “significantly improved” their instructional planning competency.

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

MAP Growth Assessments

- A slightly larger proportion of students who participated in the Intersession weeks demonstrated high levels of growth on the MAP Reading – Spanish and Mathematics assessments than comparison students. (Table 1).

Table 1: 2022-23 Intersession and Comparison Student MAP End-of-Year Growth Quintile Rates

Group	Dosage	High Average or High <i>n</i>	%
Reading (English)			
Intersession	Low	774	31.3
	Moderate	496	29.7
	High	210	27.2
	Overall	1,480	30.1
Comparison		1,590	30.3
Reading (Spanish)			
Intersession	Low	339	34.4
	Moderate	279	33.7
	High	183	32.9
	Overall	801	33.8
Comparison		710	31.2
Mathematics			
Intersession	Low	1,322	36.5
	Moderate	1,049	40.2
	High	585	40.8
	Overall	2,956	38.6
Comparison		3,138	38.4

Source: District MAP data file dated 06/25/23.

Note: Intersession dosage groups scoring higher than the comparison students are in **bold**.

Table 2: 2022-23 Intersession and Comparison Student MAP BOY to EOY Met Projected Growth

Group	Dosage	Met Project Growth <i>n</i>	%
Reading (English)			
Intersession	Low	1,030	41.4
	Moderate	663	39.8
	High	291	37.7
	Overall	1,984	40.3
Comparison		2,138	40.7
Reading (Spanish)			
Intersession	Low	470	47.8
	Moderate	368	44.3
	High	236	42.5
	Overall	1,074	45.3
Comparison		955	42.1
Mathematics			
Intersession	Low	1,700	46.8*
	Moderate	1,311	50.1*
	High	731	50.9*
	Overall	3,742	48.7
Comparison		4,011	49.0

Source: District MAP data file dated 06/25/23.

Note: * Statistically significant. Intersession dosage groups scoring higher than the comparison students are in **bold**.

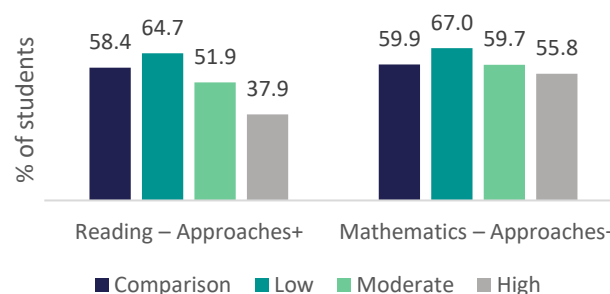
- A slightly larger proportion of students who participated in the Intersession weeks met or exceeded projected growth on the MAP Reading – Spanish assessment (45%) than students who attended comparison campuses (42%). MAP Reading – English and Mathematics assessments reported almost no difference in this regard (Table 2).

- Unlike 2021-22, when Intersession students showed an advantage over their matched peers, in 2022-23 students who attended intersession campuses were nearly as 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)

- Like 2021-22, students who attended Intersession weeks in the low dosage group were more likely to achieve Approaches+ on the STAAR (Figure 1).

Figure 1: 2022-23 Intersession and Comparison Student STAAR Performance Standard Rates



Source: District STAAR files dated 08/14/23 (grades three to eight) for students enrolled on the PEIMS snapshot date of 10/17/22.

- Like 2021-22, 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 students who attended in the moderate or high dosages.
- Rates of students at the Approaches+, Meets+, and Masters performance standards were slightly lower for Intersession campuses than comparison campuses in Reading and Mathematics.

Social Emotional Learning

- The number of Intersession campuses surpassing the district's annual SEL growth was lower than that of comparison campuses across all areas (self-efficacy, self-management, social awareness, and supportive relationships).
- Campus-level comparisons showed mixed results, and no conclusions can be drawn regarding the program's impact on SEL due to the lack of comprehensive data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Celebrate the gains of year one. The program was designed to mitigate learning loss after extended school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial year of implementation demonstrated success in mitigating the learning loss of students at campuses identified as in the greatest need. The Intersession program showed measurable success at bringing students back to pre-pandemic baseline achievement faster than base calendar

peers (Watson, 2022). In year two, it did not succeed in pushing the same campuses ahead of base calendar campuses. The district's decision to revert to the base calendar for all campuses is supported by this finding. However, the program does seem to have achieved what it set out to do, which was to reverse the effects of the pandemic learning loss at the campuses that implemented it.

Learn from the lessons of two years of extended year to improve future rollouts. While the district has discontinued the Intersession calendar at this time, the wisdom gained in Dallas can help support other local education agencies who may plan for extended year calendars in the future. The best practices include rolling out the calendar districtwide if possible, to reduce strain on families with children at multiple campuses and maintain expectations for teachers across the district, reducing transfer based on calendar. A rollout that includes complete feeder patterns is another solution that will help mitigate multi-child family stress. Additionally, since a change to state assessment dates is rarely possible, the use of additional instructional time should be concentrated at the beginning of the calendar or over a smaller number of scattered weeks, in order to see

the maximum effect on student achievement and the lowest psychological impact on teacher and student burnout. This would also ensure fewer interruptions to the learning process for those who are not required to attend intersessions while also minimizing the need for *ad hoc* childcare scheduling adjustments for parents or guardians. Finally, explore ways to work with families to maintain attendance over the course of a weeklong Intersession.

Target future programming intentionally. Given that in both years of implementation, students who attended six or fewer days of the Intersession weeks were more likely to demonstrate assessment performance gains, a small intervention might be enough to achieve growth for those students who are “on the bubble,” or close to achieving the STAAR Approaches performance standard. Based on these findings, additional programming for students who are close to meeting standards should focus on lower dosages, perhaps one- to two-week extension programs. Based on two years of findings, higher dosages which would necessitate significantly longer programs may be needed to move students with more significant learning deficits.

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