

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 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 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 program implementation, stakeholder perceptions, 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 2022-23 Extended School Year programs (School Day Redesign and Intersession programs) was \$24,332,375. This budget was funded through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) grant.¹

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 Guzick, Johnson, and Lee Elementary Schools, and Browne and Walker Middle Schools.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

How was the SDR program implemented?

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 1, 2022, and ended the school year on June 22, 2023.²

- 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 2023, 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.

Teachers

- In 2022-23, there were 158 teachers on SDR campuses and 194 teachers on comparison campuses.
- The majority of SDR campus teachers and comparison campus teachers were African American (54% and 51%, respectively) or Hispanic (33% and 27%, respectively).

Students

- In 2022-23, there were a total of 2,168 students at SDR program campuses.
- The majority of SDR students were Hispanic (63%) or African American (33%) and nearly all students were identified as economically disadvantaged (93%).
- A large proportion of SDR students were identified as EB (48%), and 16% of SDR students received Special Education services.
- Comparison campus student demographics were similar across all categories (within four percentage points or fewer).

Student Attendance Rate

- In 2022-23, SDR campuses had an average attendance rate of 93 percent (90% in 2021-22) and comparison campuses had an average attendance rate of 94 percent (92% in 2021-22).
- Three of the five (60%) SDR campuses and four out of five (80%) of comparison campuses exceeded the overall district attendance rate (93%). In 2021-22, two of the five (40%) SDR campuses and four out of five

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 15 and ended on May 26.

³ Both middle schools selected this calendar.

(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.
- As during the first year of implementation, principals expressed that the biggest challenge to implementing the program was keeping up campus “*morale*” and “*motivation*” throughout the extended year.
- Principals felt the program offered great benefits to students with fewer educational resources at home and/or less adult supervision outside of school.
- Principals recognized that teachers were experiencing “*burnout*” and took additional measures to provide support for their emotional well-being.
- Principals explained that the program benefited teachers via added compensation, additional professional development, and expanded time for lesson planning and collaboration with colleagues. However, they were deeply aware of teachers feeling “*overwhelmed*” and “*frustrated*” by the extended year.
- When asked what lessons SDR taught them as campus leaders they mentioned *flexibility* in scheduling.
- Principals reported that future implementations of the program design would benefit from shifts to assessment calendars as well as using the extra days at the beginning of the school year rather than at the end.

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

Student Surveys

Overall, 478 respondents completed the student perception survey.

- Twenty-one percent ($n = 98$) of the students indicated that they *liked* the extended calendar while 56 percent of students ($n = 267$) responded that they *did not like it*.
- Whether the new calendar helped them feel more prepared for their school work, 39 percent ($n = 185$) of students responded that the program “has helped some” or “helped a lot” while 31 percent ($n = 145$) reported that “it didn’t make any difference.”
- Half of the students (50%, $n = 234$) reported that they “enjoyed” the additional Redesign Days and that “it was very fun!”
- “Extra time to be with friends,” ($n = 135$) and “half day’s activities with its early release” ($n = 98$) were what students liked most about the new calendar.
- What they did not like about the new calendar was “having a shortened summer vacation” ($n = 219$). One student remarked, “*it’s not fair for us to stay longer and just get one month of vacation.*”

Teacher Surveys

In 2023, 79 respondents from all SDR campuses completed the teacher perception survey.

- The most commonly mentioned words provided by teachers to describe their extended calendar experience were related to exhaustion ($n = 26$) and “*long*” ($n = 11$).
- Seventy-one percent ($n = 52$) of teachers indicated that the program had increased their stress level “somewhat” or “significantly.”
- Fifty-three percent of teachers ($n = 40$) indicated that the extended calendar had benefited students “greatly” or “some”, an increase of 12 percentage points from 2022.
- Most teachers stated that they had more time for “small group” and “SEL instruction” (84 and 72%, respectively).

Staff and Leadership Surveys

Overall, 34 respondents from all SDR campuses completed the staff and leadership perception survey.

- Respondents indicated that the “additional time spent with students,” (34%) and the “additional planning time for teachers” (28%) were the best part of their school extended calendar.
- The most commonly mentioned word provided by respondents was related to exhaustion.
- Staff and campus leaders mentioned sustaining “*motivation*” and avoiding “*burnout*” as the biggest challenges to implementing the new calendar.

Parent Surveys

Overall, 155 parents from all SDR campuses completed the parent perception survey.

- When asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the new calendar, 70 percent ($n = 103$) of parents reported an *average or above* overall level of satisfaction.
- Three-fifths of parents or guardians (65%) considered that their students enjoyed attending a School Day Redesign and 60 percent of them had noticed positive academic changes in their students since attending a School Day Redesign campus this year.
- In contrast to responses from SDR teachers, 39 percent ($n = 54$) of parents reported that the program “somewhat reduced” or “significantly reduced” the impact on the amount of stress their family felt about school.

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

- At least 50 percent of teachers indicated that participation in the program had a positive impact on their instructional practices, especially with regard to teachers’ instructional presentation skills and their ways of monitoring student progress.

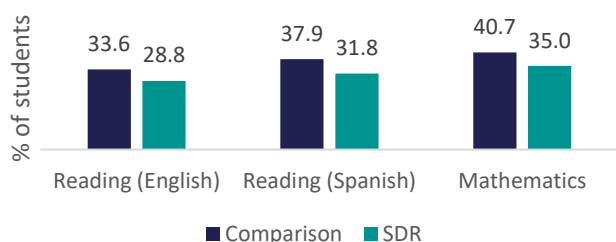
- When asked whether the increase in planning time that came with the extended calendar had led to an increase in the quality of their teaching practice, about two-fifths of teachers (42%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that it had.
- Approximately two-fifths of surveyed teachers (43%) also “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the increased collaboration among teachers had led to an increase in the quality of lessons.

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

MAP Growth Assessments

- Overall, 2022-23 EOY MAP results showed that SDR students demonstrated lower rates of high average or high EOY growth in Reading – English (five percentage points), Reading – Spanish (six percentage points), and Mathematics (six percentage points) than comparison campus students (Figure 1).

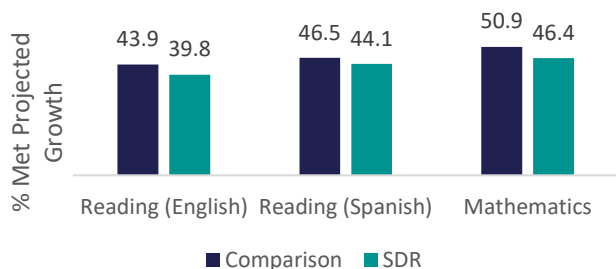
Figure 1: 2022-23 SDR and Comparison Campus MAP EOY Growth Quintiles Rates at High Average or High by Subject



Source: District EOY MAP data file date of 06/25/23.

- Similarly, 2022-23 EOY MAP results showed that SDR students demonstrated lower rates of met or exceeded growth in Reading – English (four percentage points), Reading – Spanish (two percentage points), and Mathematics (five percentage points) than comparison campus students (Figure 2).

Figure 2: 2022-23 SDR and Comparison Campus MAP BOY to EOY Met Projected Growth Rates by Subject

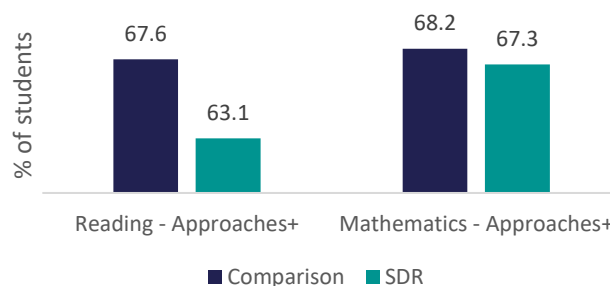


Source: District EOY MAP data file date of 06/25/23.

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 and Mathematics (Figure 3 shows results for the Approaches+ level).

Figure 3: 2022-23 Percentage of Students Attaining STAAR Approaches+ Performance Standard for School Day Redesign and Comparison Campuses – Reading and Mathematics



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

Social Emotional Learning

- Survey results showed that SDR elementary schools had more improvement in SEL dimensions than SDR middle schools when comparing BOY results with EOY results.
- 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

Continue building on the successes of redesign aspects of the calendar. Based on principal feedback, specific innovations within the SDR model could be retained and embedded into the base calendar, adding value even without extra instructional days, particularly those associated with flexible scheduling for teacher planning and collaboration periods. Half or even full redesign days should be considered for addition to base calendar campus expectations, without reducing student instructional time, using the split department model described in this report.

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 SDR 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 SDR 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 focused on the beginning of the calendar rather than at the end, in order to see the maximum effect on student achievement and the lowest psychological impact on teacher and student burnout.

EA23-641-4
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