

## SUMMARY

The goal of this evaluation was to describe how SAISD met the requirements of the DATE Grant and determine its effectiveness on improving the academic achievement of At-Risk students.

### *DATE Grant Requirements*

The SAISD DATE Grant award plan directly reflected two State goals: awarding teachers for positively impacting student achievement and the overall alignment with district goals. District goals consisted of improving student graduation rate, college readiness and District and campus state and federal accountability performance. Improving student graduation rate was addressed by the grant focusing on At-Risk students. An At-Risk student is one who is at risk of dropping out of school. College readiness and state and federal accountability were addressed by focusing on the weakest subjects which were Math and Science. When the award plan was created, Reading, Writing and Social Studies had an 84% or greater passing rate while the passing rate for Math was at 66% and 61% for Science.

The State provided districts the opportunity to choose among three program structures for their teacher performance awards: district wide, selected district campuses or TAP (Teacher Advancement Program). SAISD decided in favor of district wide implementation under which all campuses that received a TAKS accountability rating would have the opportunity to receive an award. The planning committee established performance measures for the district's area of greatest need: the performance of At-Risk students in Math and Science. In order to be eligible for an award, campuses would have to show improvement in Math or Science TAKS for At-Risk students. Campus staff that did not directly teach Math or Science at TAKS tested grade level would have to meet or exceed goals stated in their campus improvement plan that focused on At-Risk student improvement in Math and/or Science.

The SAISD DATE grant methodology for ranking campuses went through an evolutionary process. During the first year of the grant, student achievement measures were based on attainment. The second year achievement measures were based on percent of improvement. The third year achievement measures were based on expected student growth in Math and percent of improvement in Science. As required by TEA, every change in the methodology was approved by the District Leadership Team (DLT).

Program implementation was measured by analyzing four areas: 1) support, 2) awareness, 3) payout and 4) collaboration. The following is a summary of the findings for each area.

Support. Various staff members and groups within the school district and the community participated in multiple meetings to develop and implement the DATE Grant. Participants consisted of a DATE Grant committee, the DLT and central office personnel. All campus staff had the opportunity to share their views on the grant creation and implementation through various open comment periods. The DATE grant was managed by a group of central office employees who monitored all grant activities at the District and campus levels.

Awareness. TEA required districts to have a communication plan that informed staff of the criteria they had to meet in order to be eligible for an award. SAISD used a variety of channels to inform campus staff of the various grant components. These included working closely with campus administrators, a website, promotional materials and onsite presentations. In addition, information for At-Risk students was made available through online campus reports in order to monitor quarterly performance in Math and Science.

In the Spring of 2009 and 2010, a DATE Grant survey was administered to campus staff. Approximately 40% of the staff completed the survey each year. Of the survey respondents, 80% were aware that their campus was eligible to participate in the DATE Grant with 77% in 2009 and 90% in 2010 having a clear understanding of the performance criteria needed to earn a DATE incentive award.

Payout. SAISD used all grant funds, with the exception of the administrative costs, for staff awards. Depending on their employee classification, campus staff members were eligible for one of the following awards: \$2,000 for professional, \$400 for paraprofessional, and \$200 for classified staff. A review of budget expenditures for the 2009 to 2011 school years showed that the majority of DATE Grant funds were expended in staff awards. The total awarded funds budgeted for staff awards ranged from 96% to 98%. The DATE application required that at least 60% of grant funds be budgeted for teacher awards in 2009 and for teacher and principal awards in 2010 and 2011. SAISD exceeded that requirement by budgeting at least 75% for teacher and principal awards.

Collaboration. In order to provide an overview of staff collaboration activities that helped improve At-Risk student performance in Math and Science, staff members were grouped into the following categories:

- Teachers
- Campus Professionals
- Para-professionals and Classified Staff

Teachers. Cross-curricular lessons were the most popular collaboration activity implemented at campuses by teachers. Approximately, one third of all campuses each year reported core teachers implementing these lessons as part of their collaboration activities. Campuses reported that cross-curricular lessons implemented by elective teachers more than doubled in 2010 and 2011 compared to the first year of the grant. In 2010, 65% of the campuses participated in these activities with the percent dropping to 55% in 2011. After school activities and tutoring were also popular collaboration activities implemented at campuses by both core and elective teachers especially in 2011. A review of the data shows that there was a significant spike in campus wide activities in 2010 compared to the other years of the grant. At-Risk students saw a decline in TAKS Math and Science performance in 2011. Further studies would show if campus wide activities which target very focused objectives over a period of time have a stronger impact on student achievement versus afterschool activities which tend to be broad in scope and usually implemented once or twice a year.

Campus Professionals. Collaboration activities varied among campus professionals. Campus administrators showed the strongest support for tutoring. In 2009, approximately one third of the campuses reported that administrators were involved in tutoring which exceeded 50% in 2010 and 2011. Also, administrators and counselors showed strong support for afterschool activities. Librarians and nurses showed their strongest support for concept support activities such as the nurse going into a teacher's classroom to give a lesson about the circulatory system.

Para-professionals and Classified Staff. Aside from providing direct classroom support, instructional assistants showed their strongest support in afterschool activities. Due to their 40 hour workweek, this group of staff members along with clerical and classified staff were more restricted to the types of activities they could perform compared to professional staff.

Approximately 20% of campuses reported that clerical staff participated in afterschool activities that supported Math and Science. Classified staff supported concepts in Math and Science such as reviewing measurements in the lunch line.

### *Academic Achievement*

SAISD students showed consistent improvement in overall achievement levels in Math and Science during the grant implementation years, 2009 to 2011. Math and Science results met the Academically Acceptable criteria based on the State's accountability measures. The At-Risk subpopulation showed consistent improvement in the percent of students passing TAKS from 2009 to 2010. In 2011, the At-Risk student population experienced a 3% decline in Math and a 2% decline in Science.

One of the requirements of the DATE grant was to align grant goals to District goals. SAISD aligned the DATE goal of student achievement to its own goal of achieving a Recognized rating by 2012. This meant that at least 80% of all students in SAISD had to pass TAKS in Math and Science. Goals were created for all and At-Risk students with baselines set in 2008. The Math baselines were set at 70% for all and 60% for At-Risk students. The Science baselines were set at 65% for all and 50% for At-Risk students. The goal was for the percent passing to increase by 5% each year in each category. The results show that none of the goals were met in Math for either group. The Science At-Risk group met the goal in 2009 and 2010. The district overall missed the 2012 recognized goal by 7% in Math and 8% in Science.

A review of Math and Science results by campus level revealed that academies consistently achieved the District goals in both subjects. While elementary schools saw a declining trend in the percent of At-Risk students passing TAKS Math from 2009 to 2011, they managed to meet the District goal of 80% for all students in Math. Elementary campuses met the TAKS Science goals for both all and At-Risk students in 2009 and 2010. For 2011, elementary campuses saw a decrease in performance for both groups from the previous year with At-Risk students missing the Science goal by 1%. Math goals for all and At-Risk students were never met by either middle or high schools. However, high schools experienced a significant increase in passing rates for TAKS Math between 2008 and 2011, 15% for all and 13% for At-Risk students. The Science goals for high and middle school students were met in 2010 when high school At-Risk students had a passing rate of 66% versus 60% for the district goal. Middle schools experienced

a slight increase in passing rates in TAKS Science between 2008 and 2011, 4% for all and 1% for At-Risk students. Similarly to math performance, high school passing rates in Science increased by 16% for all and 13% for At-Risk students.

The methodology used to measure At-Risk student achievement for the first year of the grant was based on attainment. A total of 37 campuses received an award. Elementary schools and academies were the strongest performers. Among the 56 elementary schools that were eligible for the grant, 27 met the At-Risk student performance goal of 80% passing Math and 70% passing Science. Of the 5 academies that were eligible, 2 met the At-Risk student performance goal in Math and Science. Only 1 middle school and no high schools met the Math and Science goal for year 1.

Year 2 methodology for At-Risk student achievement was based on a percent of improvement model. A total of 26 campuses received the award. High school At-Risk students had the strongest percent of improvement in Math and Science in 2010. Nine out of 10 high schools demonstrated improvement in Math and Science. This was followed by academies and middle schools with 40% of each showing improvement in both subjects. Only 34% of elementary campuses showed improvement.

Year 3 methodology for At-Risk student achievement was based on meeting expected growth in Math and percent of improvement in Science. A total of 40 campuses received the award. Academies had the strongest performance in meeting expected growth in Math and percent of improvement in Science with 5 out of 6 campuses. Middle schools came in second with 7 out of 14 meeting expected growth and elementary schools were third with 20 out of 53. All high schools met the expected growth in Math criteria but none had at least 1% improvement in Science.

SAISD's DATE grant program met State and District implementation requirements. The program provided a monetary incentive for all campus staff to collaborate and address areas of weakness, At-Risk student achievement in Math and Science, throughout the district. Even though At-Risk students did not meet the passing goal of 75% in Math and 65% in Science, the grant raised awareness of collaboration activities that campuses could implement to tackle student achievement goals.