

SUMMARY

The goal of this evaluation was to describe how and if SAISD is meeting state and federal requirements and then determine the effectiveness of the District's Dyslexia program on the academic achievement of dyslexia students in Reading.

The International Dyslexia Association describes Dyslexia as a language-based learning disability which refers to a cluster of symptoms, resulting in people having difficulties with specific language skills, particularly Reading. In addition, Dyslexia students usually experience difficulties with other language skills such as spelling, writing and pronouncing words. Dyslexia is considered a language learning disability which makes it very difficult for students to succeed academically in the typical instructional environment. Since dyslexia is not a result of a lack of intelligence or desire to learn, students with dyslexia can learn successfully when appropriate teaching methods are used.

Approximately 5% of the SAISD KG – 12 student population is identified with dyslexia. The percent of enrolled Dyslexia students has remained stable for the past 5 years. The majority of students identified with dyslexia have been in Grades 1 to 5 with only 1% identified with dyslexia at the middle and high school levels. Also, the percent of students exited from the Dyslexia program has been consistently low.

SAISD students are assessed for dyslexia following State law that requires students be assessed for dyslexia and related disorders at appropriate times such as when parent or teacher observations reveal common characteristics of dyslexia. Students in the general education programs are assessed and identified using Section 504 operational guidelines. Special Education students are assessed through procedures established through the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

State law requires for all school districts to purchase or develop a reading program for students with dyslexia that incorporates specific components listed in the Dyslexia Handbook. SAISD provides Dyslexia reading interventions using the following programs: Istation (K – 2), System 44 (3 – 8), and READ 180 (6 – 12). The use of Istation, however, does not meet the requirements established by the Texas Administrative Code §74.28 (Students with Dyslexia and Related Disorders). Also, System 44 and READ 180 are English based programs. Dyslexia students enrolled in a Bilingual Program receiving instruction in Spanish do not have access to an intensive reading program that meets the requirements listed in the Dyslexia Handbook.

A comparison of SAISD to other large urban districts showed that all had Dyslexia intervention programs in both English and Spanish. Also, most provided each campus with a Dyslexia designated intensive Reading instructor neither of which is offered in SAISD specifically for Dyslexia students.

Program implementation was measured by analyzing 4 areas: Staffing, Staff Development, Assessment/ Identification, Instruction/ Accommodations. For the past four years, the Campus Dyslexia Coordinator duties have been assigned to a variety of campus administrators in addition to their current responsibilities making it difficult to ensure key program components were consistently implemented across SAISD campuses. While SAISD provided a vast array of staff development opportunities, the Dyslexia program was often in competition for time with classroom teachers who were also being offered training in the core as well as other programs. In the last three years, the District has improved in the percent of students identified early while little to no identification occurred at the middle and high school levels. A review of SAISD's Dyslexia instructional program revealed that while elementary and middle school students in Grades 3-8 had access to an intensive Reading program, not all Dyslexia high school students in need of an intervention received one due to the limited classroom space available. These students only received strategies and accommodations that occurred during their core instructional program. Also, reading interventions were provided to students in Grades 1 and 2 using Istation, a program that does not meet the instructional reading program requirements delineated in the Dyslexia handbook. Based on survey results, the majority of reading classroom teachers felt that while the accommodations identified in the student services plan were appropriate, they were not distributed in a timely manner.

The academic achievement of Dyslexia students was measured using the Scholastic Phonics Inventory (SPI), the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), Istation, and the Reading STAAR test. SPI results showed that System 44 Dyslexia students had a slow progression through the SPI Decoder Levels. Only 19% were able to move from the Developing to Advancing Level. Reading achievement levels on SRI varied between 56% and 75% for students whose grade level reading range either increased or met their reading target. Grade 6 (56%) had the lowest percent of students in these categories. Since Grade 6 students were enrolled daily in an additional two periods of READ 180 compared to most other grade levels, a higher level of performance was expected. The great majority of Dyslexia students with Istation

results were still in need of an intensive reading intervention at the end of the school year (87%) which mirrored the SRI results for the percent of students reading below grade level. Only 14% of Dyslexia students were either performing at or moderately below grade level compared to 52% for the District. The results above were all in line with only half of Dyslexia students meeting or exceeding expectations on the STAAR Reading progress measure. Once again, the lowest percentage of students showing growth on STAAR was at Grade 6. Similar to previous assessments, even with additional support, Dyslexia students at this grade level struggled the most when compared to other grades.

With almost all Dyslexia students identified and receiving Dyslexia reading interventions in elementary grades, the District performance trend should improve at the higher grades yet this is not reflected in the STAAR Reading results. The gap between the percent of District and Dyslexia students passing in middle and high school was not significantly reduced and at some grade levels was greater than at elementary grades. The lack of a Dyslexia intervention program at Grades 1 and 2 can only contribute to the low performance on STAAR Reading.

Overall, the SAISD Dyslexia program implementation analysis in conjunction with achievement data finds the Dyslexia program to be ineffective at some grade levels in providing Dyslexia students with the intensive reading instruction and strategies necessary to become successful readers.