

## **Academics 2000: Cycle VIII Evaluation Report 2001-2002**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to present evaluation findings regarding the implementation and the effectiveness of the Academics 2000, Cycle VIII grant in AISD. 2001-02 was the final year for the grant, but the information in this report may be useful to district decision makers in identifying needs to be met through other means.

This report provides a brief description of the grant and its implementation in AISD, including the staff hired, the materials funded, the professional development provided and the classroom activities performed through the grant. The report contains information on grant results related to changes in teaching practice, parent involvement, and student achievement. It also includes information on obstacles that may have decreased the effectiveness of grant activities. Finally, recommendations are presented for continuing some activities and for improving those activities.

Academics 2000 funding was provided through the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* for planning and implementation of initiatives to improve reading, including intensive and sustained professional development in research-based instructional strategies and methodologies. The purpose of Academics 2000 was to raise the level of academic achievement of all Texas students



reported that coaching was “very effective,” and one reported that it was “somewhat effective.” In a survey for teachers, 67% of teachers responding reported that coaching was “very useful,” 31% reported that it was “somewhat useful,” and 2% reported that it was “not very useful.”

During the lessons, coaches observed, modeled strategies and gave assistance as necessary. Surveyed about modeling, six coaches reported that it was “very effective,” and one coach reported that it was “somewhat effective.” Among teachers, 64% of teachers responding reported that it was “very useful,” 32% reported that it was “somewhat useful,” and 4% reported that it was “not very useful.” Surveyed about classroom support or coteaching, five coaches reported that it was “very effective,” and two coaches reported that it was “somewhat effective.” Of teachers responding, 66% reported that it was “very useful,” 32% reported that it was “somewhat useful,” and 2% reported that it was “not very useful.”

### **FAMILY PARTICIPATION**

Each campus in the district held at least two family literacy events during the year. According to attendance sheets from each campus, 1,017 parents attended these events. Average attendance at individual events was 23 parents. Observed events comprised a number of booths, organized by grade level and staffed by teachers and volunteer tutors, each with a game or activity that supported age-appropriate reading skills. Most literacy events followed this pattern, but a few campuses held different events, including a “readers’ tea” and a “writing night.”

### **COLLABORATIONS**

AISD staff coordinated efforts with staff from several other organizations. The Austin Learning Academy offered English as a Second Language classes for family members of students. The 351 participating parents attended a total of 12,404 hours of classes. Kof ents attents

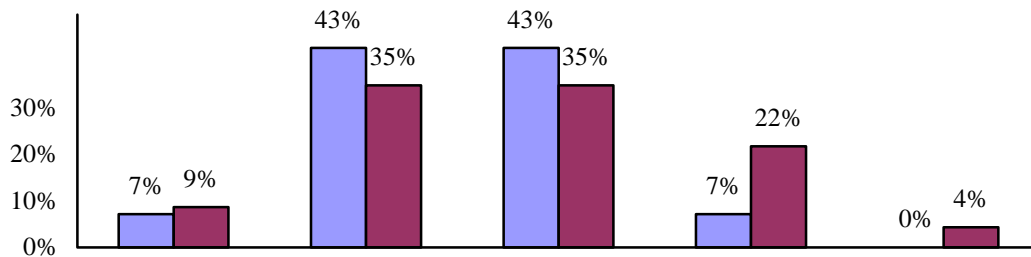
## **CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

Over the course of the year, the evaluator observed 28 classes (14 classes in December and 14 classes in April) to evaluate the extent to which training was being implemented in classroom practice. A second evaluator observed nine of the lessons. Agreement between the observers was 88%. After each observation, the evaluators compared notes and reached consensus. Lessons were to cover language arts, and include strategies taught through the grant program. The evaluator rated each class on implementation of program strategies, including Balanced Literacy, Guided Reading and the Principles of Learning that are currently stressed in the district: Accountable Talk, Clear Expectations, and Academ

As part of the April observation, the evaluator used a locally developed protocol for evaluating the Principles of Learning. The levels of accomplishment on the protocol for each Principle are, ‘absence,’ ‘initiation,’ ‘beginning,’ ‘accomplished,’ and ‘exemplary.’ Findings were compared to a districtwide pilot of the observation protocol in which 23 elementary classes were observed.

The vast majority of classes at participating schools were in the lower stages of implementation with very few classes at the Accomplished or Exemplary stages (Figures 1-3). It should be noted, though, that although Academics 2000 schools lag behind the district, the pattern of implementation of is very similar to that of the district as a whole, especially in the areas of Accountable Talk and Clear Expectations. Implementation of the Principles of Learning in AISD is reported more fully in Principles of Learning, 2001-02 Evaluation Report (District Report 01.16).

Figure 1: Classroom Observation Ratings for Implementation of Accountable Talk in the Academics 2000 Evaluation and in the Pilot for the Observation Protocol





reported that they had trouble teaching centers, or didn't believe in them and four (10%) reported having problems with classroom management, especially for students working independently. TAAS pressure was reported as an obstacle by two teachers (5%), and three teachers (8%) had difficulty going to off-campus training sessions.

The challenge most commonly reported by reading coaches was variability in teachers' levels of experience and knowledge of Balanced Literacy. Coaches also reported lack of feedback from supervisors as a challenge.

The program manager reported that the biggest challenge this year was a shortage of funding. Because not all funding was spent in 2000-01, TEA reduced funding for 2001-02 by 20%. According to an interview with the program manager, spending grant money was made difficult by purchasing problems, which sometimes made the order process take months, and by accounting problems at central office that made it difficult to tell how much money was available. In order to provide all promised services, program staff reduced the number of coaches to seven from a planned 12, and limited the support materials sent to campuses.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Teachers and coaches reported that the training received through the grant was useful, but it did not translate into improved TAAS scores. The most frequently cited obstacle listed by teachers that could account for this, is that teachers did not have enough time to implement the strategies they were learning. It is recommended that the district continue to support training efforts by helping teachers to structure their days such that they could find time to absorb and use the strategies taught by the program.

The current budget includes a plan to continue the contract with IFL to provide professional development in Content Focused Coaching. Also, materials and some trained staff are already at each program campus, so the effort is to some degree self-sustaining. To reduce

support materials available for Spanish-speaking students. This is especially important in light of the fact that, beginning in 2002-03, campus libraries will a.0004 723.71985oo0Tm(.11)Tj10.02 t7a7210.02 t7



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