

Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation
OCTOBER 2004

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Early Education Model (TEEM) Demonstration Project. This is a state project to achieve higher levels of school readiness in cost effective ways.

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AUSTIN I SD PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM, 2003-04

The purpose of this evaluation of the Austin Independent School District (AISD) prekindergarten (pre-K) program is to inform

A I S D P R E K I N D E R G A R T E N P R O G R A M D E S C R I P T I O N

In 2003-04, AISD offered full-day prekindergarten instruction to eligible four-year-olds who were limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged, or homeless. This was the second year for AISD to offer full-day instruction to students in all 65 elementary schools with prekindergarten programs. See Appendix B for a complete list of the schools that had prekindergarten programs in 2003-04.

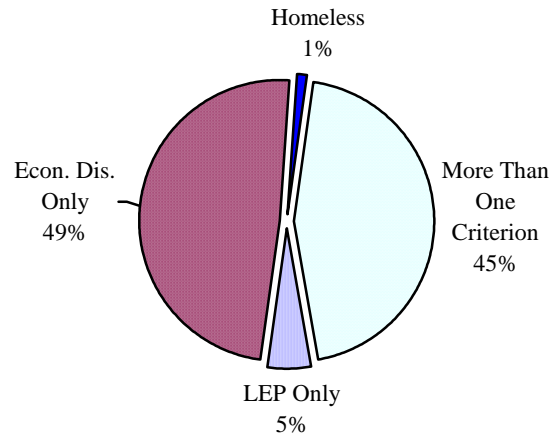
Student Information

A total of 4,499 (4,414 in 2002-03) four-year-olds attended AISD prekindergarten during 2003-04. This year's prekindergarten enrollment was the largest ever for AISD. According to AISD student records, demographics for 2003-04 prekindergarten children include the following:

- Gender was balanced with 49% female and 51% male students.
- Ninety-three percent (n=4,184) of students were from low-income families.
- Fifty-three percent of students (n=2,367) were of limited English proficiency (LEP).
- Homeless students (n=39) comprised less than 1% of all prekindergarten students.
- As shown in Figure 1, Hispanic students comprised the largest ethnic group (n=3,397), followed by African American (n=685), Anglo/Other (n=269), and Asian (n=148) students. The numbers of Hispanic and Asian prekindergarten

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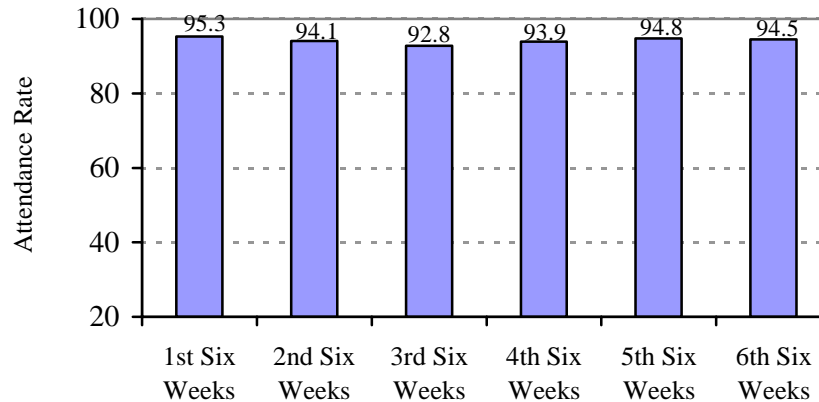
Figure 2: Percentages of Types of Eligibility for AISD Prekindergarten Students, 2003-04



Source: 2003-04 PEIMS data

The average daily attendance has been historically lower for prekindergarten than for other elementary grades. The average daily attendance for pre-K students in 2003-04 was 94.2% (up slightly from 93.8% in 2002-03), compared with 95.5% for kindergarten and 96.4% for grade 1 students. Figure 3 shows the 2003-04 average daily attendance for prekindergarten students by six-week period.

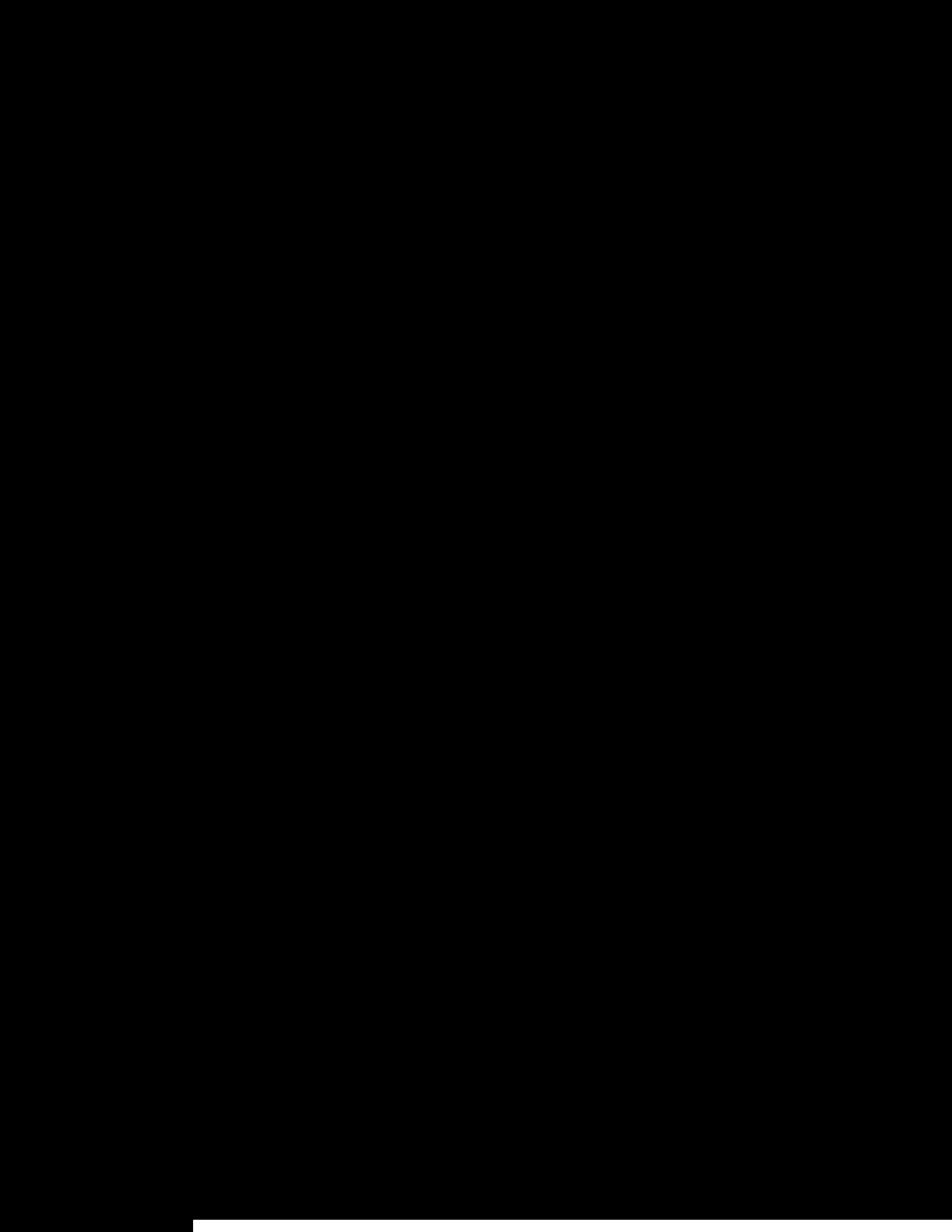
Figure 3: Average Daily Attendance for AISD Prekindergarten Students by Six-Week Period, 2003-04



Source: 2003-04 PEIMS Summer Collection, Resubmission

Campus and Teacher Information

The number of pre-K students served at each of the 65 campuses varied widely in 2003-04, and ranged from 21 students at Casis to 158 students at Walnut Creek. The average pre-K student-teacher ratio in 2003-04 was 17.2, down from 18.2 in 2002-03. Table 1 summarizes various program comparison data from 1999-2000 through 2003-04. (Note: These data include all prekindergarten students served at any point in a given year.)



to the national average, the gain score would be zero. **Any gain greater than zero indicates that the student's performance improved compared to the national average.**

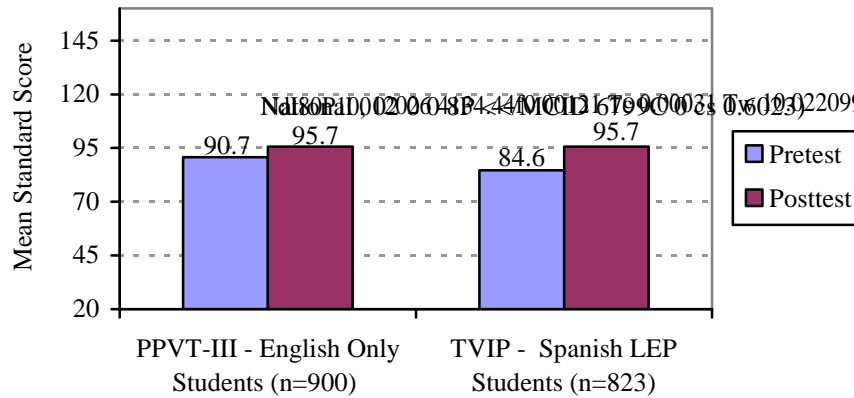
The PPVT-III and TVIP are achievement tests of the level of a person's vocabulary acquisition. However, the tests can only be used as a screening test of verbal ability when tested in the examinee's home language. Spanish LEP students are tested in English (in addition to Spanish) to measure growth in English language acquisition that is part of the English as second language (ESL) component of prekindergarten. See Appendix C for the average PPVT-III and TVIP scores by school.

Testing Sample

In fall 2003 and spring 2004, the PPVT-III and TVIP were administered to a random sample of pre-K students in all AISD schools with prekindergarten programs. As shown in Figure 6, students tested closely matched the overall AISD pre-K population. All students in the sample were tested in English (PPVT-III); Spanish LEP students also were tested in 4 Tm(nisterto

While the Spanish language students had a lower average pretest score (84.6 standard score points) than the English language students (90.7 points) when tested in the native language, Spanish language students made double the gains (11.1 points) of English language students (5.0 points) on the posttest. **However, the average posttest score for both groups of students was 95.7 standard score points, only 4.3 standard score points short of the national average of 100.** Figure 7 shows the average pretest and posttest scores when students took these tests in their native language; the horizontal line represents the national norm of 100.

Figure 7: Average PPVT-III and TVIP Pretest and Posttest Scores for AISD Pre-K Students When Tested in Their Native Language, 2003-04



Students Scoring in Average Range

It is important to know how prepared the pre-K students will be when they start kindergarten. Although 100 is the national average score, there is an average range for both the PPVT-III and the TVIP of 85-115 standard score points (one standard deviation above and below the mean). The assumption is that students who advance to the average range in the test of their native language will be ready to accelerate future literacy learning in kindergarten.

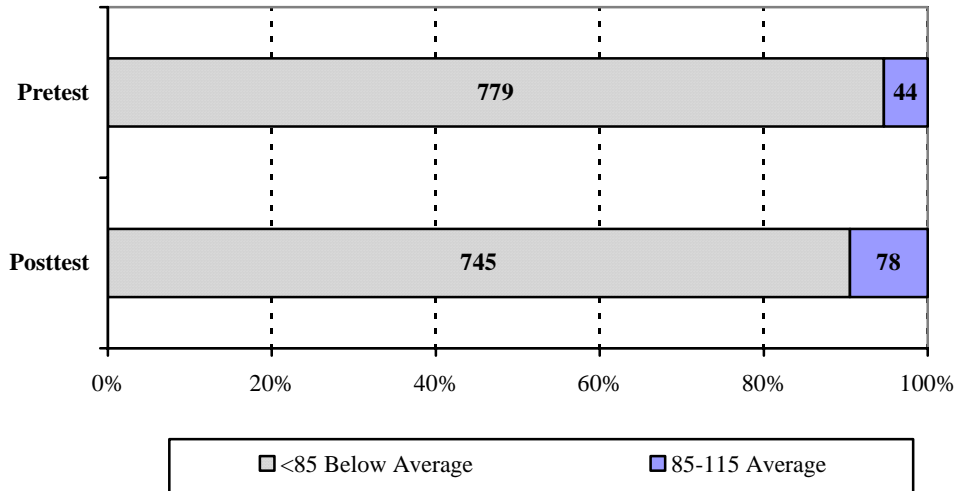
Each posttest score was examined to determine if it fell within this range for all students taking the PPVT-III, Spanish LEP students taking the TVIP, Spanish LEP students taking the PPVT-III, and English-only students on the PPVT-III. Analysis of these data reveals the following information:

- **81% (n=1,395) of all students tested in the native language scored in the average or above average range at the posttest;**
- 83% (n=749) of *English-only* students tested on the PPVT-III scored in the average or above average range at the posttest;
- 78% (n=646) of all *Spanish LEP* students tested on the TVIP scored in the average or above average range at the posttest;
- 48% (n=827) of *all students* tested on the PPVT-III scored in the average or above average range at the posttest;
- 9% (n=78) of *Spanish LEP* students tested on the PPVT-III scored in the average or above average range at the posttest ; and
- 8% (n=66) of *Spanish LEP* students tested on both the PPVT-III and the TVIP scored in the average or above average range at the posttest.

Figures 9-12 show the numbers and percentages of students who scored in the below average, average, and above average ranges at the pretest and posttest. Figure 9 shows that when examining scores for all pre-K students tested on the PPVT-III, there is an increase in the number of students who were in the average or above average range from the pretest

While the PPVT-III scores were low for Spanish language students, the number of students in the average range increased by 45%, from 44 at the pretest to 78 at the posttest. Figure 12 shows the numbers and percentages of Spanish language pre-K students in the below average and average ranges at PPVT-III pre- and posttest.

Figure 12: Number and Percentage of AISD Spanish Language Pre-K Students (N=823) Who Were Below, At, and Above Average on the PPVT-III Pretest and Posttest, 2003-04



None were above average in receptive vocabulary at the pre- or posttest.
Source: AISD Program Evaluation TVIP Records, 2003-04

A total of 40% (42% in 2002-03) of the 2003-04 prekindergarten students in the testing sample were at or above the national average of 100 at the posttest when tested in their native language. Of these, 37% (n=335) of all English-only students taking the PPVT-III had a standard score of 100 (national average) or higher, and 42% (n= 345) of all Spanish LEP students tested on the TVIP had a standard score of 100 or higher on the posttest.

Progress in Mathematics

AISD uses the *Prekindergarten Report to Parents* four times each year to report student academic progress, which is rated by teachers for the areas of pre-reading/concepts of print, oral language, writing, listening, mathematics, social studies/science/health, and English as a second language. The performance scale used for rating academic progress is as follows: 1-needs improvement, 2-basic understanding, 3-skilled, and 4-advanced. Although there are major instructional goals listed on the *Prekindergarten Report to Parents*, there is no continuum for expected development by which to assess progress.

Because there is no formal mathematics assessment for pre-K through grade 2 in AISD at this time, mathematics ratings on the *Prekindergarten Report to Parents* were used to determine progress in mathematics during prekindergarten. Although there is no definition of “on grade level,” the state *Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines* elaborate on appropriate academic progress for pre-K students. Teachers were asked to list the ma

In 2004-05, a prekindergarten language and mathematics assessment will be piloted by a group of 10 prekindergarten teachers who participated in the creation of the assessment instrument. The assessment has been aligned with the *Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines*. The new DLM *Early Childhood Express* curriculum was the primary resource for the development of the assessment instrument.

2. How did the program demonstrate effectiveness of activities of the expanded full-day prekindergarten in achieving its goals?

Professional development with the new DLM *Early Childhood Express* curriculum was the major focus of training for prekindergarten teachers in 2003-04. The publishers of the curriculum provided resources for these trainings. At the beginning of the year training in August 2003, some of the authors of the curriculum, Dr. Doug Clements (math), Dr. Pam Schiller (brain research), and Dr. Thomas Moore (music), presented ideas and resources available to support instruction.

Professional Development

In 2003-04, 217 (83%) pre-K teachers attended 3,001 hours of professional development that were directly relating to prekindergarten instruction, which is almost triple the number of 2002-03 training hours (1,072 hours) for prekindergarten teachers. Seventy-three percent (n=159) of these teachers attended more than one training session. Prekindergarten teachers who attended training had an average of 13.8 hours. Professional development opportunities for pre-K teachers include the following:

Math

- *Prekindergarten TEXTEAMS* training - Three days of training that emphasized the five content areas of prekindergarten mathematics guidelines.
- *Navigating Algebra Grades Pre-K to 2* – This class helped teachers recognize and identify the Patterns, Relationships and Algebraic Thinking Strand in Mathematics.

DLM Early Childhood Express Curriculum

- Pre-K DLM Textbook System – The DLM *Early Childhood Express* is the newly adopted, official textbook system required for use in all AISD Pre-Kindergarten classes. AISD Pre-K Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs) are aligned directly to this curriculum.

Prekindergarten Guidelines (Three-hour classes on these specific skill areas).

- Implementing Pre-K Language Arts Guidelines;
- Implementing Pre-K Science and Math Guidelines; and
- Implementing Pre-K Social Studies Guidelines.

Instructional Planning Guides (IPGs)

- Pre-K Team Leader Curriculum Update – These two-hour sessions addressed the use of IPGs for pre-K teacher planning and instruction.

Science

- *Treehomes* – This science training related to the GEMS (*Great Explorations in Math and Science*) curriculum for prekindergarten students.

Assessment

- *Using the Self-Assessment Tool: Pre-K Curriculum Guidelines* – The TEA Director of Early Childhood, Cami Jones, introduced the new state guide, *Impacting Student Achievement Through the Language and Literacy Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines: A Self-Assessment Tool*.
- Pre-K Assessment Taskforce - A select

When prekindergarten teachers were asked on the teacher survey, “How would you rate the professional development to support the new curriculum,” the average response was 2.7 on a 4 point scale with 4 being excellent and 1 being poor. (See Appendix D for a summary of the responses to the 2003-04 Prekindergarten Teacher Survey.) The majority (58%) of teachers who responded to the survey indicated that the professional development had been good or excellent in 2003-04. Figure 16 shows the percentages of teachers’ ratings of professional development.

Figure 16: Professional Development Rating by AISD Prekindergarten Teachers, 2003-04



Classroom Visits

Visits to 13 prekindergarten classrooms were conducted in March 2004 at three campuses, Allan, Dawson, and Wooldridge. The purpose of the prekindergarten classroom visits was to view the implementation of the new DLM *Early Childhood Express* curriculum and to talk with teachers about the effectiveness of the curriculum to support teaching and learning. Three staff persons from the Department of Program Evaluation observed the classroom environment, materials and curriculum, and learning opportunities for prekindergarten students. Protocol for the visits included the following:

- Sending prekindergarten teachers a survey with questions about the curriculum and materials prior to the visits.
- Observing the prekindergarten classrooms during the school day.
- Using University of Texas Houston Health Science Center forms as a guide (*Preschool Early Language and Literacy Quick Check* and *Basic Classroom Environment Checklist*) to focus the observation on prekindergarten skills and activities.
- Meeting with teachers at the end of the day to discuss the curriculum and materials survey.

Reflections from Classroom Visits

The structure of these prekindergarten classrooms allowed for both rigorous academic learning as well as developmentally appropriate opportunities. From the time they entered the classroom, students often were engaged in activity centers. Some of the centers included literacy activities, math manipulatives, science and discovery, writing journals, books, blocks, puzzles and games, and housekeeping centers.

The new curriculum integrated plan started with the theme, “enduring” understanding, and essential questions each day. Key concepts and skills to be developed were then defined. Learning activities included English/language arts, math, science, social studies, and technology. Enrichment activities, modifications, and assessments were also part of the day’s plan.

Balanced literacy learning activities included Read Aloud, Independent Reading, Shared Reading, Independent Writing, and Shared Writing. Small group instruction took place during center time when the teacher worked with a few children to teach or practice a skill. Physical exercise occurred during outside play time and during a more structured physical education time. Students participated in calendar, music, phonics, poetry, literacy, and math activities during together time. Technology was part of the curriculum, but many teachers said that because of older computers, they were unable to use the math CD-ROMs.

Prekindergarten students had breakfast and lunch at school as well as a nap. Teachers served as an extension of home by helping students with their everyday needs as well as academic and social needs. The program evaluation staff found these prekindergarten classrooms to be comfortable and secure places for these four-year-olds to spend their days while stimulating their interest in learning. Student work is proudly displayed and criteria charts displayed on classroom walls helped children know what was expected of them. Teachers involved students in “Accountable Talk” about the quality of their work. Students participated in large group, small group, and individualized instruction throughout the day.

According to Anita Uphaus, evidence of accelerated learning in the prekindergarten classrooms during 2003-04 can be summarized as follows:

- Teachers have higher expectations for student learning.
- District-written curriculum requirements are being addressed by both teachers and administrators.
- Students are involved in relevant purposeful learning activities.

Program evaluation observers would agree that teachers are creating opportunities to increase student learning for these four-year-olds. However, one observer noticed the lack of

- Math CD-ROM games and management system were difficult to work or they do not work with older computers.
- There are too many teacher-made materials.
- Suggestions are needed for integrating math, science and social studies to the stories used for literature.
- The skills do not seem to be taught in an order that build 0 er-m

Figure 18: Four-Year Comparison for AISD Spanish LEP Pre-K Students
Tested on the TVIP, 2000-01 through 2003-04



determine if there was any difference in passing rates for students who attended half-day and full-day prekindergarten during 1999-2000. There was a slightly higher percentage passing (92%) for 1999-2000 full-day Spanish language students than half-day students (91%), but no difference for English language students. Because there have been four years of instruction since these grade 3 students were in prekindergarten, it is not possible to say that the full-day program had more of an impact than half-day, but previous studies have indicated that the full-day program was especially beneficial for Spanish language prekindergarten students.

The effect of instruction since prekindergarten was examined by looking at the Grade 3 TAKS reading performance of former prekindergarten students who completed prekindergarten with below average (below 85 standard score points), average (85-115 points), or above average (above 115 points) performance on the PPVT-III or TVIP. An analysis of these data indicate the following:

- For the 1999-2000 cohort of Spanish language students who had a valid 2004 Grade 3 TAKS reading score, 86% of those below average (<85 standard score points), 94% of those in the average range (85-115 points), and 100% of those above average (>115 points) on the TVIP posttest passed TAKS reading. Of these 414 Spanish language students in the 1999-2000 prekindergarten cohort, 259 (63%) took Spanish TAKS reading and 155 (37%) took English TAKS reading.
- For the 1999-2000 cohort of English language students who had a valid 2004 Grade 3 TAKS reading score, 82% of those below average (<85 standard score points), 93% of those in the average range (85-115 points), and 100% of those above average (>115 points) on the PPVT-III posttest passed TAKS reading.

The national average on both the PPVT-III and the TVIP is 100 standard score points. An analysis of the 1999-2000 cohort of prekindergarten students indicated that those who score *at or above 100 standard score points* at the end of prekindergarten had the greatest success on the 2004 TAKS Grade 3 reading test. For the English language cohort students (n=188) who scored 100 or above on the PPVT-III posttest in 1999-2000, 98% (n=184) passed 2004 TAKS reading. For Spanish language cohort students (n=236) who scored 100 or above on the TVIP posttest, 99% (n=234) passed 2004 TAKS reading.

Program Manager Comments

The administrative supervisor for prekindergarten, Anita Uphaus, responded to survey questions about the prekindergarten program. Mrs. Uphaus said that the major areas of focus in prekindergarten classrooms during 2003-04 included the following:

- Use of the new textbook adoption materials, DLM *Early Childhood Express*;
- Use of new instructional planning guides (IPGs) that were created to align the new textbook system to the district curriculum requirements; and,
- Organization of the pre-K team leaders from each campus to be the “conduit” for information and training at the campus level.

Strengths of the Program

According to Mrs. Uphaus, a major strength of the AISD prekindergarten program is providing full-day pre-K for all eligible students. More emphasis has been placed on prekindergarten education in AISD in the past few years, which is evidenced in full-day classes, a defined curriculum focus, and instructional planning guides for prekindergarten. In

addition, certified teachers trained in early childhood teaching and learning strategies are provided for prekindergarten classrooms.

In 2003-04, AISD also participated in a collaborative effort, through the Texas Center for Early Childhood Development, that paired the district with Head Start and local childcare agencies (a childcare coordination project originating in Senate Bill 76). Pre-K teachers from eight AISD campuses (Andrews, Cowan, Dawson, Pecan Springs, Ridgetop, Rodriguez, Sanchez, and Winn) were chosen to participate in the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM) Demonstration Project. This is a state project to achieve higher levels of school readiness in cost effective ways.

Also, the teachers have repeatedly commented about some of the strengths of the new curriculum adoption to Mrs. Uphaus, including the following:

- The system is the same for both Spanish and English classrooms.
- The system supports a balanced program integrating basic content areas.
- The teacher guides are well organized and follows a nine-week cycle, which correlates, well to the reporting periods, and include state curriculum requirements.
- The system contains strong curriculum support materials for both teacher and student use including quality trade books, multiple instructional resources, and CD-ROMs for mathematics and recordkeeping.

Major Challenges

With the expansion of the full-day program to all prekindergarten classes in 2002-03, Mrs. Uphaus indicated that there were still many challenges associated with the continued growth in student population in 2003-04. In fact, the 2003-04 enrollment was the largest ever for prekindergarten in AISD. Some of those challenges include the following:

- Finding certified bilingual teachers;
- Maintaining a reasonable teacher/student ratio in every classroom;
- Increasing teacher commitment to attending training sessions; and
- Addressing increased collaboration efforts with childcare agencies outside the district.

Areas for Program Improvement

There are many program improvements planned for 2004-05, Mrs. Uphaus said. The leadership duties for the prekindergarten program will be shared between the administrative supervisor and a curriculum specialist, Brian Mowry, in 2004-05. According to Mrs. Uphaus, "This will support a more concentrated focus on teacher training and curriculum implementation while allowing the supervisor to address the increased program requirements and collaboration initiatives." Other program improvements include the following:

- A group of 10 teachers have worked together to design a student assessment that correlates to the IPGs and the *Prekindergarten Report to Parents*. These teachers will pilot and refine the assessment during the school year. Districtwide training will be provided for all pre-K teachers before the 2005-06 school year to allow the new assessment to be expanded to all prekindergarten classrooms next year.
- A principal focus group has been formed through the leadership of the Associate Superintendent for Elementary Education. This group will assist in guiding decisions and providing support for the prekindergarten program.

- New prekindergarten teacher training sessions will be held bimonthly to address district expectations and provide support.
- Professional development will be reviewed and teacher suggestions for training will be added.

SUMMARY

During 2003-04, the AISD prekindergarten program continued to grow and change. With growth came challenges of funding, hiring enough certified teachers, and providing meaningful professional development. Along with a growing prekindergarten population, teachers learned a new state-provided curriculum and used the corresponding district-developed instructional planning guides (IPGs). Amidst the growth and change, however, student progress in language and literacy and mathematics in 2003-04 remained consistent with 2002-03 results.

Program effectiveness in language and literacy for prekindergarten was determined by gains from pretest to posttest on the English language *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-III* (PPVT-III) and the Spanish language *Test de Vocabulario en Imágenes Peabody*

A longitudinal study using PPVT-III/TVIP scores of students who attended AISD prekindergarten in 1999-2000 and their 2004 Grade 3 TAKS reading results was conducted. TAKS 2004 reading scores were matched for 935 (414 Spanish language and 521 English language) students who attended prekindergarten in 1999-2000. The 1999-2000 cohort had a lower passing rate (92%) than the district (97%) on 2004 English TAKS reading. However, the cohort had a passing rate (92%) similar to that of the district (93%) on 2004 Spanish TAKS reading. Prekindergarten students are served based on a greater need than the district population.

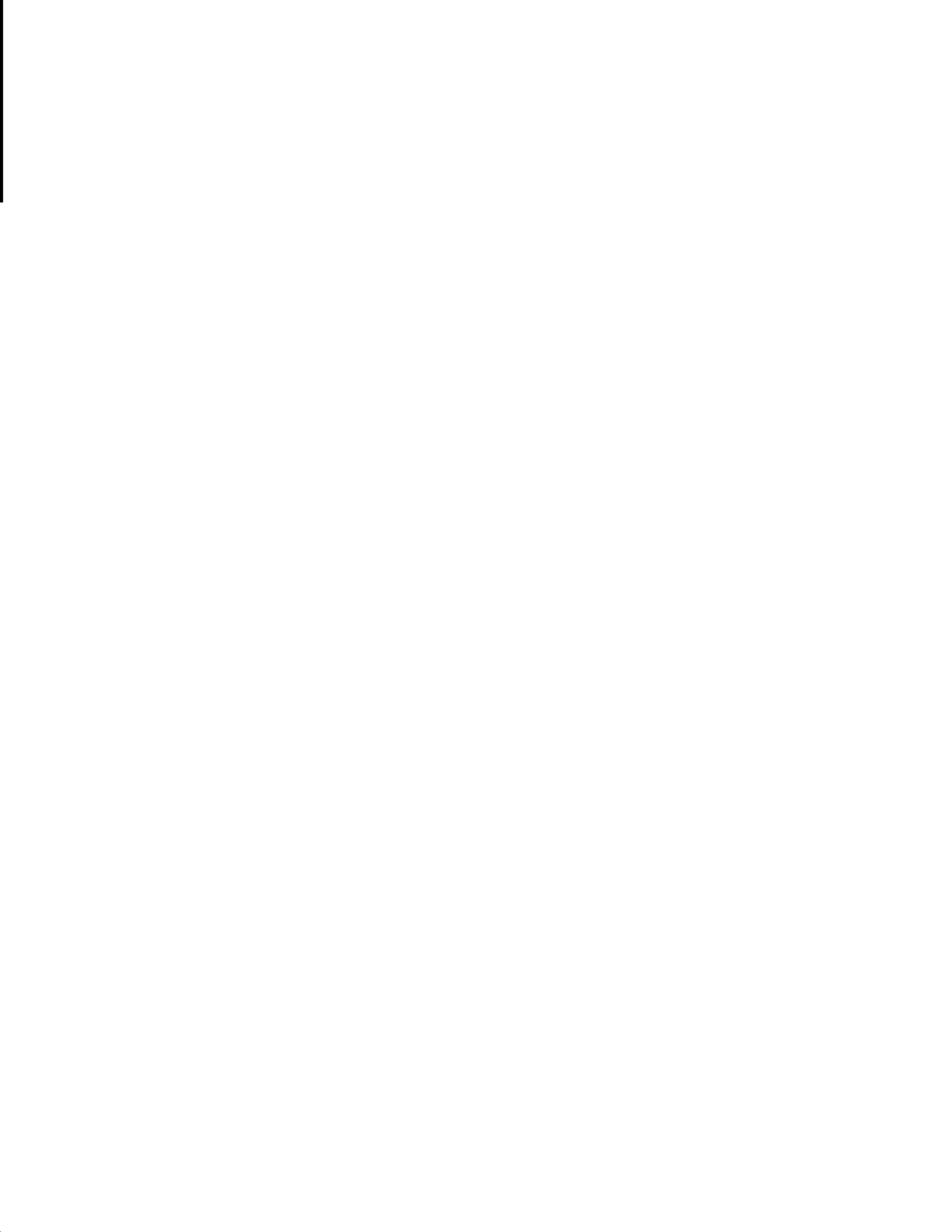
The national average on both the PPVT-III and the TVIP is 100 standard score points. An analysis of the 1999-2000 cohort of prekindergarten students indicated that those who scored at or above 100 standard score points at the end of prekindergarten had the greatest success on 2004 TAKS Grade 3 reading. For the English language cohort students (n=188) who scored 100 or above on the PPVT-III pos(3)5scores artem students are serv

Growth in language/literacy and math was maintained in 2003-04 even with more students and teachers, a new curriculum, and new instructional planning guides. In 2004-05 with these new tools and quality training, the prekindergarten teachers will be challenged to close the achievement gap even more.

3. **How will the program determine the impact, short-term and long-term, of the activities of the expanded full-day prekindergarten on the participants?**

Short-term impact – Using the PPVT-III and the TVIP data from 2003-04 and prior years, comparisons between current year gains in receptive vocabulary for all students tested will be made to previous years' gains. The mathematics pretest and posttest pilot data will show current year progress in mathematics for prekindergarten students.

Long-term impact- A longitudinal study using PPVT-III/TVIP scores of students who attended AISD prekindergarten in 1999-2000 and their 2004 Grade 3 TAKS reading results will be conducted. The 2004 Grade 3 TAKS reading passing rates of former full-day and half-day prekindergarten students with valid PPVT-III/TVIP pre- and posttest scores will be examined to determine if there is any difference in passing rates for students who attended half-day and full-day prekindergarten. The effect of instruction since prekindergarten will be examined by looking at the Grade 3 TAKS reading performance of former prekindergarten students who completed prekindergarten below average (below 85 standard score points), average (85-115 points), and above average (above 115 points) on the PPVT-III or TVIP.



Appendix C: Average PPVT-III and TVIP Pretest, Posttest, and Gain Scores by School (PPVT-III for English-Only & TVIP for Spanish LEP Students), 2003-04

School	Average Pretest
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School	Average Pretest PPVT-III	Average Posttest PPVT-III	Average Gain PPVT-III	Average Pretest TVIP	Average Posttest TVIP	Average Gain TVIP
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Appendix D: Summary of 2003-04 Prekindergarten Teacher Survey

143 prekindergarten teachers rated the DLM *Early Childhood Express* curriculum and training in May 2004 by the following scale: 4=Excellent,; 3=Good; 2=Fair; 1=Poor. Average responses are given below.

Curriculum Questions	Number of Responses	Average Response
1. How well do the DLM <i>Early Childhood Express</i> curriculum resources support the following subject areas?		2.7 Overall
Language & Literacy	142	3.0
Mathematics	142	2.7
Science	143	2.6
Social Studies	143	2.6
Technology Applications	137	2.6
Physical Education	136	2.4
2. How well do the DLM <i>Early Childhood Express</i> teacher resources support teaching and learning in prekindergarten classrooms?		2.9 Overall
Teacher's Guide	143	3.1
Teacher's Resource Anthology	141	3.1
Teacher Resource Guide - Home Connections	140	2.9
Teacher Resource Guide - English Phonics	126	2.8
Teacher Resource Guide - Spanish Phonics	83	2.6
Math Resource Package	140	2.8
Assessment Resource Guide	141	2.6
3. How well do the DLM <i>Early Childhood Express</i> curriculum student materials support instruction?		3.2 Overall
Sequencing Cards	140	3.1
Alphabet Wall Cards	141	3.2
Oral Language Development Cards	142	3.2
Big Book Package	142	3.3
Listening Center Little Book Package	142	3.3
Music CD-ROMs	140	3.3
Photo Library CD-ROM	131	2.9
Manipulative Package	140	2.9

Curriculum Questions	Number of Responses	Average Response
4. How well do the English language curriculum and materials support instruction for English language students?	118	3.0
5. How well do the Spanish language curriculum and materials support instruction for Spanish language students?	73	2.8
6. How well does the curriculum coordinate with the Prekindergarten Guidelines?	142	3.3
7. How well do the district IPGs coordinate with the new curriculum?	139	3.2
8. How would you rate the professional development to support the new curriculum?	138	2.7
9. How well have district efforts (e.g., IPGs, curriculum matrices) to support prekindergarten instruction impacted student learning?	127	2.9

10. What additional professional development opportunities are needed to support the new curriculum?

See Page 12 for summarized responses to this question.

11. What do you like best about the new DLM Curriculum?

See Page 16 for summarized responses to this question.

12. Are there curriculum areas that need additional support? If yes, please give suggestions.

See Page 16 for summarized responses to this question.

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