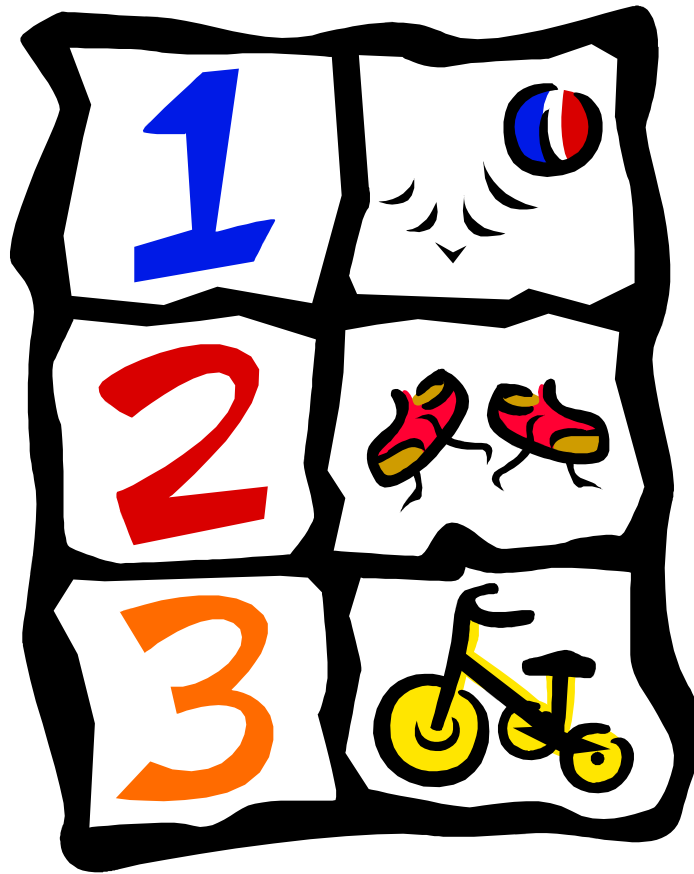


AISD Prekindergarten
Expansion Grant Evaluation Report,
2008-2009

PROMOTING SCHOOL READINESS



Austin Independent School District
Department of Program Evaluation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ensuring that children are ready for successful school experiences is one of the most pressing issues in early childhood today (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2004). What is school readiness? According to NAEYC, school readiness must be flexibly and broadly defined because children develop in unique ways and at different rates from one another (p. 1). The demand for school readiness comes at a time when early childhood educators are uneasy about the effect increased performance demands may have on young children's development (National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2007).

In 2008–2009, free half-day pre-K was available in Texas to 4-year-olds who met one of these eligibility criteria: limited English proficient (LEP), economically disadvantaged, homeless, in foster care, or having either an active duty military parent or a parent who was a member of the armed forces and was injured or killed while serving on active duty (TEA, 2008). Additional state funding was available to districts through the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant. To qualify for this funding in the 2008–2009 school year, districts were required to develop a School Readiness Integration Plan to describe how the district would accomplish the integration of services for pre-K students and their families. The Austin Independent School District (AISD) qualified for a Cycle 14 Prekindergarten Expansion Grant of more than \$4 million in 2008–2009.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

AISD provided full-day pre-K to 5,196 4-year-olds in 2008–2009 at 65 elementary campuses and the Lucy Read Prekindergarten Demonstration School (Read). According to AISD's 2008–2009 student and teacher records, demographic and enrollment information for pre-K students included the following:

- Ninety-four percent of students ($n = 4,874$) were from low-income families.
- Fifty-nine percent of students ($n = 3,074$) were English language learners (ELLs), students whose home language was not English.
- Fifty-four percent ($n = 2,831$) of pre-K students qualified by both income and language.
- Homeless students ($n = 87$), children who were military dependents ($n = 32$), and children in foster care ($n = 18$) comprised about 3% of all pre-K students.
- Forty-six languages were reported spoken in the homes of pre-K students.
- Hispanic students comprised the largest ethnic group (79%), followed by African American (11%), Anglo/other (6%), and Asian (4%) students.
- Pre-K classrooms were taught by 169 (55%) bilingual-certified, 87 (28%) English-language, and 53 (17%) English-as-a-second-language- (ESL) certified teachers, who had an average of 10.4 years teaching experience.

PRE-K BUDGET

The estimated cost of the district's full-day pre-K program (\$16 million) in the 2008–2009 school year was funded as follows: 28% (\$4,444,494) from the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, 72% (\$11,622,083) from state and local funds, and less than 1% (\$70,205)

from Title I funds. These funds did not include monies for transportation and food services, and indirect costs.

STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Pre-Reading/Early Literacy

Student performance 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* (TVIP) determined the effectiveness of language and literacy learning in the pre-K program. The PPVT-III and TVIP measure knowledge of receptive vocabulary in English and in Spanish, respectively. Standard test scores for both tests are based on national age norms, with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. A standard score of 85 to 115 points indicates a student is in the average range.

A total of 2,066 pre-K students had valid PPVT-III/TVIP pre- and posttest scores (880 in English only and 1,186 in English and Spanish). Major student achievement findings from the 2008–2009 PPVT-III and TVIP district testing sample indicate the AISD pre-K program was effective:

- Seventy percent of English-language students made measureable gains on the PPVT-III, and 79% of Spanish ELLs made gains on the TVIP.
- Average gains for English-language students on the PPVT-III and for Spanish ELLs on the TVIP indicate students showed growth about two times greater than that expected for 4-year-olds after a 7-month period of instruction.
- At the posttest, 81% ($n = 1,596$) of all students scored in the average range on tests in their language of instruction (80% in Spanish and 83% in English), indicating a readiness of kindergarten.

Cognitive Development in Other Areas

The revised *AISD Pre-K Report Card Assessment Rubrics* (AISD, 2008a) has been a helpful tool for teachers to evaluate the academic progress of pre-K students and to report that progress to parents. In 2008–2009, the academic areas with the highest percentages of students on grade level at the end of the year were social studies (87%), math (85%), and writing (85%). Social development is important to readiness for kindergarten. Growth in social development was evident from the increase in the percentages of students meeting expectations on all personal development traits, from 34% at the end of the first 9-week period to 72% at the end of the fourth 9-week period.

Long-Term TAKS Results

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) 2009 reading and math data were analyzed for a grade 3 cohort of students who attended AISD pre-K in 2004–2005, compared with data for a cohort who did not attend AISD pre-K that year. Results indicated students who attended pre-K had slightly higher TAKS reading and TAKS math passing rates than did those who did not attend pre-K, when compared by income and language. The differences between TAKS results for the two groups of students were higher for math (7 points) than for reading (2 points).

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In 2008–2009, the AISD pre-K program participated in many innovative programs and partnerships to promote integration of services for pre-K students and their families. Descriptions of some of the AISD pre-K community partnerships with local nonprofit agencies and private day care providers are as follows:

- **Satellite campuses:** AISD placed three pre-K teachers in two Head Start campuses and two private child-care facilities and served 27 4-year olds.
- **Head Start (Child, Inc.):** Head Start provided instructional support and comprehensive health services to 953 low-income students.
- **Texas Early Education Model (TEEM):** TEEM is a state Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) program that integrates professional development activities and follow-up coaching for teachers in public school, child care, and Head Start.
- **AmeriCorps for Community Engagement and Education (ACEE):** AmeriCorps participants ($n = 57$) served AISD pre-K students at Read Pre-K Center and Sanchez Elementary School.

READ PREKINDERGARTEN DEMONSTRATION CENTER

During its third year of operation in 2008–2009, Read’s growth stabilized at 620 students, after an increased enrollment of 53% from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008. After a decline from 2006–2007 to 2007–2008, student achievement gains on the PPVT-III and the TVIP at Read improved in 2008–2009.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although state and grant funding do not cover the entire cost of full-day pre-K for disadvantaged 4-year-olds, the AISD Board of Trustees made the commitment to continue the full-day pre-K program in 2009–2010. Each year when budget cuts are required, the possibility of returning to half-day pre-K is raised. However, with 54% of the 2008–2009 pre-K students qualifying by language and income, the need is evident for a full-day of instruction to prepare these students for success in kindergarten and beyond. District research has shown that gains for full-day pre-K students were significantly greater than gains for half-day students, especially for LEP students, in the 3 years prior to 2002-2003, the year all classes became full day (Curry, 2002). The following recommendations are offered to AISD decision makers:

- Commit the necessary resources to provide a high-quality full-day pre-K program for disadvantaged 4-year-olds to ensure their future success in school.
- Support developmentally appropriate practices for pre-K, while insisting on the academic rigor required for these 4-year-olds to read on grade level by grade 3.
- Expand collaboration with community organizations to provide opportunities for integrated services for pre-K students and their families.
- Provide high-quality staff development opportunities to district pre-K teachers and community partners that will help them accelerate learning for their students.
- Provide additional resources and training to accelerate English-language learning

in all pre-K classrooms.

- Consider creating an attendance zone for Read in order to receive Title I funds, which are currently unavailable even though 94% of Read students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch.

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INTRODUCTION

As the world increasingly is shaped by global competition, early childhood programs will play an even greater role in child development and school readiness than they already do (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007). Ensuring that children are ready for successful school experiences is one of the most pressing issues in early childhood today (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2004). What is school readiness? According to NAEYC, school readiness must be flexibly and broadly defined because children develop in unique ways and at different rates from one another (p. 1). The demand for school readiness comes at a time when early childhood educators are uneasy about the effect increased performance demands may have on young children's development (National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2007).

The State of Texas, which serves more 4-year-olds than does any other state, is not a stranger to this dilemma (Wat & Doctors, 2007). In 2003, the 78th Texas legislature passed Senate Bill 76, which promoted school readiness by requiring certain agencies to coordinate early childhood services (e.g., Head Start agencies, public school prekindergarten [pre-K] programs, and private and nonprofit early childhood programs). The major emphasis of the bill was to serve more Texas children cost-effectively in high-quality preschools. Senate Bill 23 (2005), passed by the 79th Texas legislature, further expanded the school readiness program.

In 2008–2009, free half-day pre-K was available in Texas to eligible 4-year-olds. Additional state funding was available to districts through the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant. To qualify for this funding in the 2008–2009 school year, districts were required to develop a School Readiness Integration Plan to describe how the district would accomplish the integration of services for pre-K students and their families. The Austin Independent School District (AISD) qualified for a Cycle 14 Prekindergarten Expansion Grant of more than \$4 million dollars in 2008–2009. This report summarizes the collaborations and initiatives that were part of the AISD pre-K program during the 2008–2009 school year, as well as the academic progress of pre-K students.

AISD PRE-K PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

AISD provides full-day pre-K for all eligible children who are 4-years-old on or before September 1st of the current school year. To be eligible for public pre-K in Texas, a student must meet one of these eligibility criteria: limited English proficient (LEP), economically disadvantaged, homeless, in foster care, or having either an active duty military parent or a parent who was a member of member of armed forces and was injured or killed while serving on active duty (TEA, 2008). In this report, LEP students are referred to as English language learners (ELLs) and economically disadvantaged students are referred to as low-income students.

The AISD pre-K program promotes growth in all the areas of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development for young children (AISD, 2007c). Learning opportunities occur individually, in small groups, and in large groups. Pre-K students focus on the content areas of language and literacy, mathematics (math), social studies, science, technology, health, visual arts, music, and physical education to prepare them for success in

kindergarten. In addition to academics, breakfast and lunch are provided, as well as outside play and rest time.

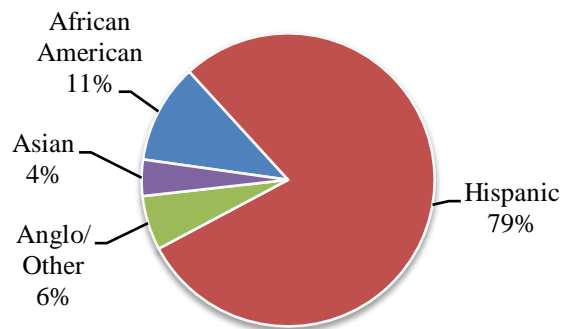
Learning centers are an integral part of the pre-K program in AISD. Centers provide pre-K students with opportunities to learn about new academic concepts, as well as self-responsibility and how to follow directions, complete tasks, share materials, and communicate their needs. Examples of learning centers in the pre-K classroom include home living, creative dramatics, blocks, manipulatives, science, listening, art, library, alphabet centers, writing, storytelling/puppets, pocket chart with poetry, and math.

STUDENT INFORMATION

A total of 5,196 4-year-olds attended AISD pre-K during 2008–2009, compared with 5,132 in 2007–2008. During 2008–2009, 66 AISD campuses, including Lucy Read Prekindergarten Demonstration School (Read), offered pre-K instruction. In its third year of operation, Read focused on meeting the needs of 4-year-olds from four North Austin elementary schools (i.e., Cook, McBee, Walnut Creek, and Wooldridge). According to AISD student records, demographic information for all pre-K children in 2008–2009 included the following:

- Gender was balanced, with 50% male and 50% female.
- Ninety-four percent of students ($n = 4,874$) were from low-income families.
- Fifty-nine percent of students ($n = 3,074$) were ELLs whose home language was not English.
- Homeless students ($n = 87$) comprised 2% of all pre-K students.
- Children who were military dependents ($n = 32$) and children in foster care ($n = 18$) comprised 1% of all pre-K students.
- Fifty-four percent ($n = 2,831$) of students met the LEP and low-income criteria.
- As shown in Figure 1, Hispanic students comprised the largest ethnic group ($n = 4,078$ or 79%), followed by African American ($n = 592$ or 11%), Anglo/other ($n = 302$ or 6%), and Asian ($n = 224$ or 4%) students.

Figure 1. Pre-K Students, by Ethnicity, 2008–2009



Source. AISD student records, 2008–2009

ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

AISD pre-K enrollment increased by 1%, from 5,132 in 2007–2008 to 5,196 in 2008–2009. Table 1 summarizes 6 years of program data, from 2003–2004 through 2008–2009. These data include all pre-K students served at any point in a given year.

Table 1. Pre-K Summary Information, 2003–2004 through 2008–2009

	2003– 2004	2004– 2005	2005– 2006	2006– 2007	2007– 2008	2008– 2009
Number of schools with pre-K	65	67	66	*66	**67	***66
Number of teachers	262	281	287	293	300	307
Number of pre-K students	4,499	5,097	5,014	5,073	5,132	5,196
Number of low-income students	4,184	4,798	4,632	4,797	4,823	4,874
Number of ELLs	2,367	2,555	2,862	3,013	3,057	3,070

Source. AISD student and human resource records, 2003–2004 to 2008–2009

Note. Students can be both low income and ELL.

* Read Pre-K Center and Perez opened, and Cook and McBee no longer offered pre-K.

** Blazier and Overton opened, and Wooldridge no longer offered pre-K.

*** Walnut Creek Vietnamese pre-K students transferred to Summitt.

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION

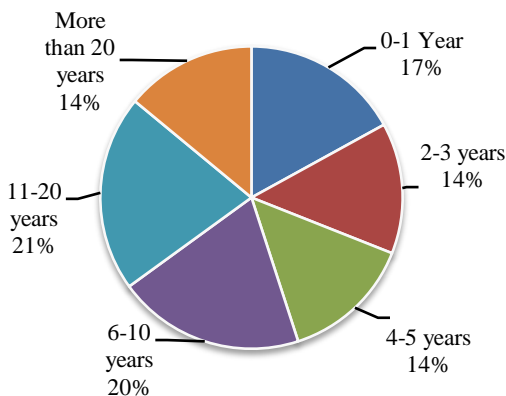
AISD offered pre-K instruction in English and Spanish, as well as in Vietnamese (at Summitt) and Korean (at Mathews). For students whose primary language was not English or Spanish (5%), English instruction was delivered by an ESL-certified teacher. In 2008–2009, 55% of pre-K students received the majority of their instruction in Spanish.

Forty-six languages were reported by parents as spoken in the homes of this year's pre-K students. The languages reported with the most frequency were Spanish ($n = 3,021$, or 55%); English ($n = 2,183$, or 40%); Vietnamese ($n = 61$, or 1%); and Korean ($n = 34$, or 1%).

TEACHER INFORMATION

The pre-K teaching staff was composed of 169 bilingual-certified (55%), 87 English-speaking (28%), and 53 ESL-certified (17%) teachers, with an average of 10.4 years of teaching experience (compared with 9.8 in 2007–2008). More than half ($n = 171$, or 55%) of pre-K teachers in AISD had 6 or more years of teaching experience, and all AISD pre-K teachers met the highly qualified criteria for No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001). To be deemed highly qualified by NCLB, teachers must have a bachelor's degree and full state certification or licensure. The percentage of teachers at each level of teaching experience is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Pre-K Teachers, by Years of Teaching Experience, 2008–2009



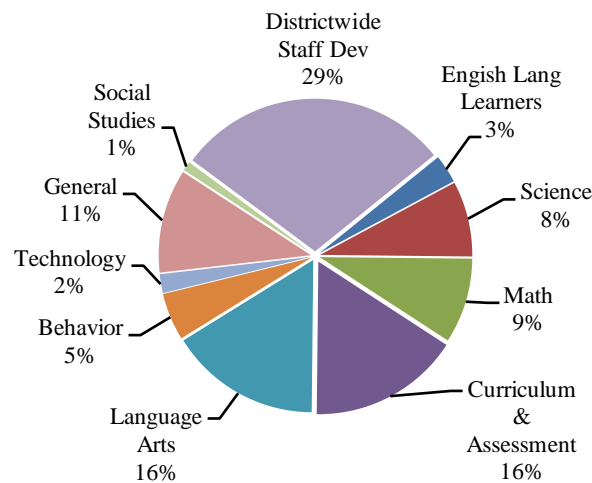
Source. AISD human resource files, 2008–2009

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In 2008–2009, 221 pre-K teachers (72%) attended 4,864 hours of professional development activities in 31 courses directly related to pre-K instruction or classroom management (i.e., an average of 22 hours of completed professional development activities). Curriculum and assessment were the subjects for the highest number of hours ($n = 1,117$) of training for pre-K teachers, followed by language arts ($n = 1,107$) and play and development ($n = 637$). Ten AISD pre-K teachers are certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. On the Prekindergarten Teacher Survey, 94.6% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The prekindergarten-specific training that I attended this year provided useful information that I use in my classroom.”

In addition, all pre-K teachers attended the February 13, 2009 districtwide staff development day specifically designed for their interests, bringing the total number of hours completed by pre-K teachers in AISD-sponsored pre-K specific training during 2008–2009 to 6,964 hours. Figure 3 shows the percentage of AISD professional development activity hours per subject area in 2008–2009. Thirty-two pre-K teachers listed pre-K-specific professional development activities and conferences they attended in addition to those offered by AISD.

Figure 3. Professional Development Activity Hours in AISD Pre-K-Specific Training, 2008–2009



Source. AISD Professional Development Center records, 2008–2009

AISD PRE-K INITIATIVES

Community Partnerships

AISD has a long history of collaborating with the community. In 2008–2009, the AISD pre-K program participated in many innovative programs and partnerships to promote the integration of services for pre-K students and their families. Community members, local nonprofit agencies, and private day care providers were involved in these initiatives.

- **Satellite campuses:** AISD placed three pre-K teachers in community preschools. Two Head Start campuses and two licensed child-care providers, Stepping Stone and Children’s Courtyard, served as satellite campuses for 27 4-year-olds who qualified for the program. The satellite teachers used the same curriculum as did

AISD teachers to plan instruction and attended AISD professional development opportunities.

- **Head Start (Child, Inc.):** Head Start provided 33 instructional aides in 33 pre-K classrooms and 21 visiting teachers in 48 classrooms during 2008–2009. A total of 953 low-income students qualified for and received instructional support and comprehensive health services.
- **Texas Early Education Model (TEEM):** TEEM is a state Center for Improving the Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE) program that integrates professional development activities and follow-up coaching for public school, child care, and Head Start. The AISD pre-K program has been participating in TEEM since 2003, and 18 pre-K teachers participated in the training during 2008–2009. Eighteen pre-K classrooms have Texas School Ready™ certification from CIRCLE.
- **AmeriCorps for Community Engagement and Education (ACEE):** AmeriCorps participants served AISD pre-K students at Read and Sanchez during 2008–2009. The training/work-study program was offered through University of Texas Charles Dana Center. At Read, 50 ACEE members attended literacy training and worked directly with students in small groups in the classrooms, library, and science laboratory. In addition, Read ACEE staff provided ESL classes and child care for Read parents twice a week in the evenings. At Sanchez, 7 ACEE members worked in all pre-K classrooms, providing literacy lessons and ongoing literacy support, as well as providing parent literacy classes.
- **ASPIRE at Read.** ASPIRE Family Literacy Program of Communities In Schools seeks to prepare children for success in school through early childhood education, parent education, adult education, and parent/child literacy activities. ASPIRE provided parents in the Read attendance area with ESL classes and parenting education. Early childhood classes for 3-year-olds, as well as parent involvement in the school classrooms, reinforced the pre-literacy and home-literacy skills and practices that prepare children for academic success in the coming years. Home visitors screened ASPIRE children for developmental delays, vocabulary gains, and alphabet knowledge.
- **ACCESS Support at Read:** The Austin Community Collaboration to Enhance Student Success (ACCESS) is a multi-year, \$8.6 million grant that integrates district and community resources in innovative ways to best serve the students of AISD. The primary ACCESS supported resource at Read was a full-time counselor who was charged with the following: (a) providing individual and group counseling, (b) leading the implementation and training of the Incredible Years curriculum and the Devereux Early Childhood Program, and (c) collaborating with the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) external coach to implement both curricula.
- **WorkSource:** The Greater Austin Area Workforce Board offered subsidized child care for eligible parents and training for child care providers. Funding to AISD allowed the hiring of an early childhood specialist to work with identified families

and all collaborating child-care providers, as well as funding to support quality initiatives.

- **E3 Alliance:** The E3 Alliance is a regional task force to create and adopt standards for school readiness in Central Texas. AISD early childhood staff met with the group to discuss what it means to be school ready and to network and share information among participating members. Using the 2008–2009 Prekindergarten Assessment Rubrics as a guide, the group developed the Central Texas Guide to School Readiness: Benchmarks, Assessment and Instructional Strategies, to be piloted in Central Texas kindergarten classes in 2009–2010.

Academic and Curriculum Resources

To add more academic rigor to the program, AISD early childhood leaders provided pre-K teachers with opportunities to revise the pre-K assessment rubrics and attend pre-K-specific professional development activities to enhance classroom instruction and student learning. The 2008–2009 academic and curriculum resources for pre-K are described here.

- **State-adopted curriculum:** The state-adopted curriculum resource used in AISD pre-K classrooms is the *DLM Early Childhood Express* (Lara-Alecio & Irby, 2003), an integrated curriculum in English and in Spanish, which is aligned with the state *Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines* (TEA, 1999).
- **ESL curriculum resource:** *Avenues: Vocabulary Builders*, a pre-K ESL curriculum from Hampton-Brown (2004), was used as a supplemental resource for English-language instruction in bilingual and ESL classrooms.
- **Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines:** These guidelines, first published by TEA in 1999, were based on knowledge of theory and research about how children develop and learn. The Revised Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines were approved by the Commissioner of Education on May 21, 2008.
- **Instructional planning guides (IPGs):** The *Pre-K Austin ISD Instructional Planning Guide* (IPG) (AISD, 2008) is aligned with the curriculum. The IPGs, written by early childhood educators and implemented in Fall 2004, outline a sequence for instruction in each content area. During Summer 2008, a team of teachers from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise collaborated to create the revised AISD Pre-K IPGs.
- **Assessment rubrics:** The *AISD Pre-K Report Card Assessment Rubrics* (AISD, 2008a), developed and refined by a team of pre-K teachers, provided consistency in assessment across the district. The Pre-K Assessment Task Force has met each summer since the original rubrics were drafted in 2004 to revise these assessment guidelines based on teacher experience and feedback. The 2008–2009 rubrics provided ongoing assessment for reporting student progress each 9-week period on the Prekindergarten Report to Parents.

PRE-K BUDGET

The Texas Foundation School Program provides funding for half-day pre-K to districts with at least 15 students who qualify. AISD applied for and received the state Cycle 14 Prekindergarten Expansion Grant in 2008–2009 to fund an additional half day of instruction.

The grant funded full-day instruction at 47 of the 66 AISD schools with pre-K programs. Additional full-day pre-K classes had not been added to the grant since 2000 due to state budget constraints. Therefore, additional local funds were needed to fund the full-day program at the remaining schools.

The estimated cost of the district's 2008–2009 pre-K program (more than \$16 million) was funded as follows: 28% (\$4,444,494) from the Prekindergarten Expansion Grant, 72% (\$11,622,083) from state and local funds, and less than 1% (\$70,205) from Title I funds. These funds did not include monies for transportation and food services, or indirect costs.

EVALUATION METHOD

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

This evaluation of the AISD pre-K program will address the following questions:

- How many 4-year-olds were served by the pre-K program?
- What student achievement gains were made during 2008–2009?
- How did AISD participate with other community organizations to provide integrated services for pre-K students and their families?
- Did student achievement improve at Lucy Read Prekindergarten Demonstration School in 2008–2009?

DATA COLLECTION

Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) staff collected quantitative and qualitative data to determine program effectiveness, as well as to identify areas in need of improvement. A description of the types of data collected and the method(s) used to collect them follows.

- **Peabody Picture Vocabulary Tests:** Student performance 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* (TVIP) determined the effectiveness of language and literacy learning in pre-K.
- **Pre-K grade reports:** The *AISD Pre-K Report Card Assessment Rubrics* (AISD, 2008a) was used districtwide to report student performance in academic areas in 2008–2009. A sample of students' grades for academic subjects and of personal development traits during each 9-week period was analyzed.
- **Teacher surveys:** Pre-K teachers were asked to respond to an online survey to give feedback about the strengths of the program and areas for improvement.
- **2009 Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS):** To determine the long-term impact of the pre-K program, the 2009 TAKS reading and math scores for a cohort of grade 3 students who attended AISD pre-K in 2004–2005 were compared with those of grade 3 students who did not attend AISD pre-K.

STUDENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

LANGUAGE ARTS/PRE-READING

The importance of vocabulary knowledge has long been recognized in the development of reading skills. For this reason, the main assessment tools used to evaluate the AISD pre-K program were tests that measured growth in receptive (hearing) vocabulary as the foundation for later reading skills.

Background and Description of Assessments

The PPVT-III and the TVIP measure knowledge of receptive vocabulary in English and in Spanish, respectively (Dunn & Dunn, 1997). Standard test scores for both tests are based on national age norms, with a mean of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. A standard score of 85 to 115 points indicates a student is in the average range. For a student to maintain his or her standing relative to the national average, the gain score from pretest to posttest must be zero. Because these tests are age normed, a student must have a raw score about 8 to 10 points higher in the spring to get the same standard score as in the fall. Any gain greater than zero indicates the student's performance improved compared with the national average. Evidence of gains greater than zero, on average, can be used to infer AISD pre-K program effectiveness.

Administration of PPVT-III and TVIP in AISD

In Fall 2008, the PPVT-III was administered to pre-K students at Read and to a random sample of pre-K students at the other 65 campuses with pre-K classes. Spanish ELLs also were tested in Spanish (TVIP). Although the PPVT-III is not normed for ELL students, Spanish ELLs were tested in English (in addition to Spanish) to measure growth in English language acquisition, which is part of the ESL component of pre-K. The posttest was administered in April and May 2009 to pretested students who were enrolled in AISD. The testing sample was designed to closely match the demographic characteristics of students in the AISD pre-K population.

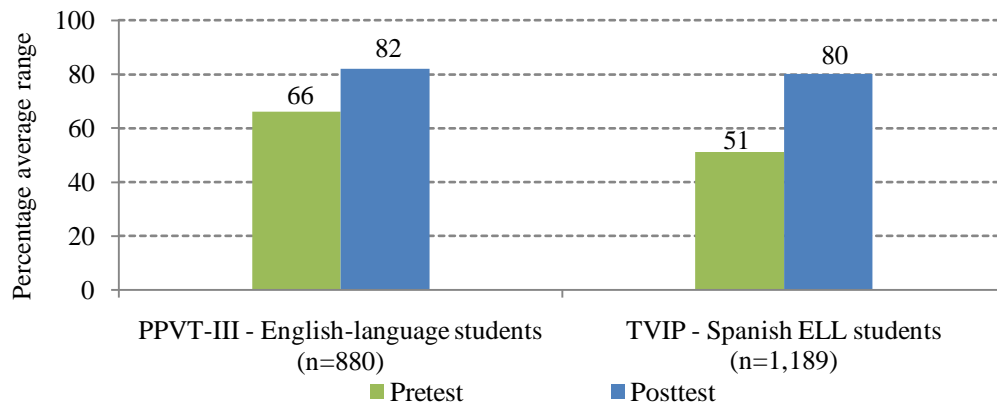
2008–2009 PRE-K TEST RESULTS

A total of 2,066 (compared with 1,975 in 2007–2008) pre-K students had valid PPVT-III/TVIP pre- and posttest scores (880 in English only and 1,186 in English and Spanish) in 2008–2009. This sample size represented 39% of AISD pre-K students. Of the students tested, 475 were students at Read (102 in English only and 373 in English and Spanish). Findings from the district testing sample, including Read, are discussed in this section.

Students Scoring in the Average Range

It is important to know how prepared pre-K students will be when they start kindergarten. Although 100 is the national average score, both the PPVT-III and the TVIP have an average range of 85 to 115 standard score points. The assumption is that students who advance to the average range in the test of their language of instruction will be ready to accelerate future literacy learning in kindergarten. At the posttest in Spring 2009, 81% ($n = 1,667$) of all students scored in the average range on tests in their language of instruction (80% in Spanish and 82% in English). From pretest to posttest, a 57% increase was noted in the number of Spanish ELLs in the average range, and a 24% increase was noted in the number of English-language students scoring in the average range (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Pre-K Students in the PPVT-III and TVIP Average Range at Pretest and Posttest, 2008–2009



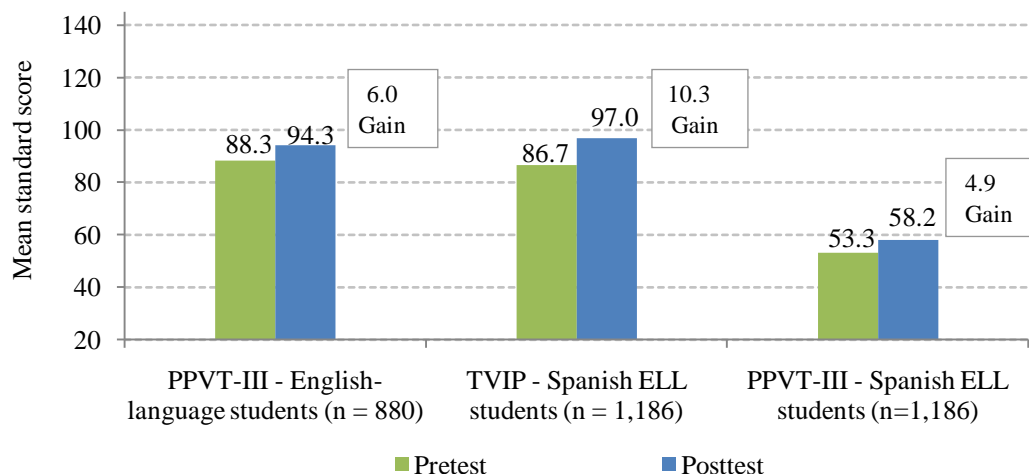
Source. 2008–2009 DPE PPVT-III and TVIP data files

Average Gains for 2008–2009 Testing Sample

Figure 5 shows the 2008–2009 average standard scores at pretest and posttest for pre-K students, by language and type of test, as well as the average gain. Findings from the analysis of average gains on the PPVT-III and the TVIP for the 2008-2009 testing sample indicated the following:

- Seventy percent of **English-language** students made gains on the **PPVT-III** from pretest to posttest (compared with 76% in 2007–2008). The average gain was 6.0 standard score points.
- Seventy-nine percent of all **Spanish ELLs** made gains on the **TVIP** from pretest to posttest (compared with 78% in 2007–2008). Forty-eight percent made gains on both the TVIP and the PPVT-III, with average gains of 10.3 and 4.9, respectively.
- Average growth in receptive vocabulary for English-language students on the PPVT-III and for Spanish-language students on the TVIP was twice that expected for 4-year-olds in a 7-month period (1 year, 1 month, on the PPVT-III and 1 year, 2 months on the TVIP).

Figure 5. PPVT-III and TVIP Results for English-Language and Spanish ELLs, 2008–2009



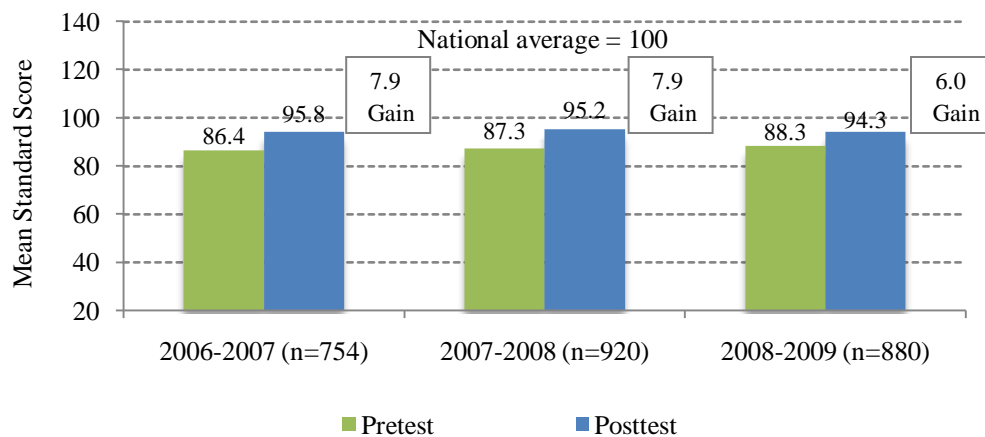
Source. 2008–2009 DPE PPVT-III and TVIP data files

3-Year Summary of Achievement Gains

Three years of PPVT-III and TVIP data are presented in Figures 6, 7, and 8. Major findings relating to average gains on PPVT-III and TVIP for pre-K students from 2006–2007 through 2008–2009 include the following:

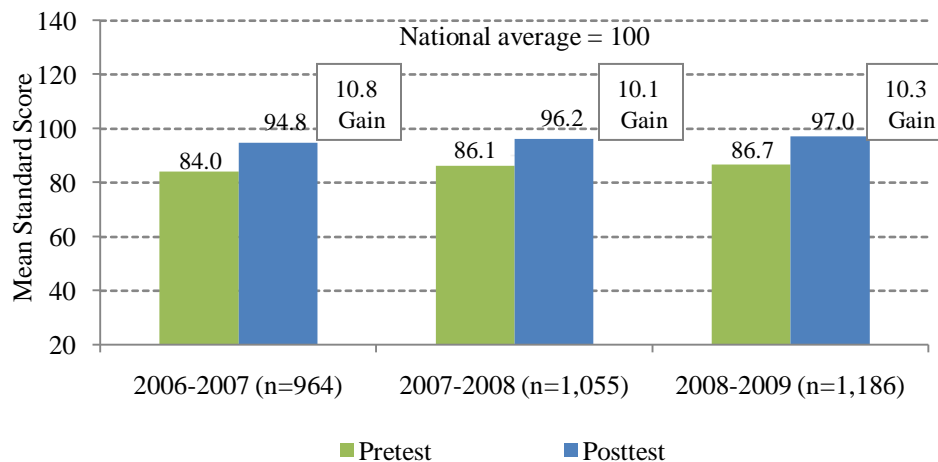
- The average gain and posttest average on the PPVT-III for English-language students were at the lowest level of the last 3 years in 2008–2009 (Figure 6).
- The average TVIP gains for the past 3 years have been above 10 standard score points. The 2008–2009 TVIP posttest average was higher than in the previous 2 years (Figure 7).
- After declining to an average gain of 3.8 standard score points in 2007–2008, the average gain on the PPVT-III for Spanish ELLs increased to 4.9 in 2008–2009 (Figure 8).

Figure 6. Average Pretest and Posttest Scores for English-Language Pre-K Students Tested on PPVT-III, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009



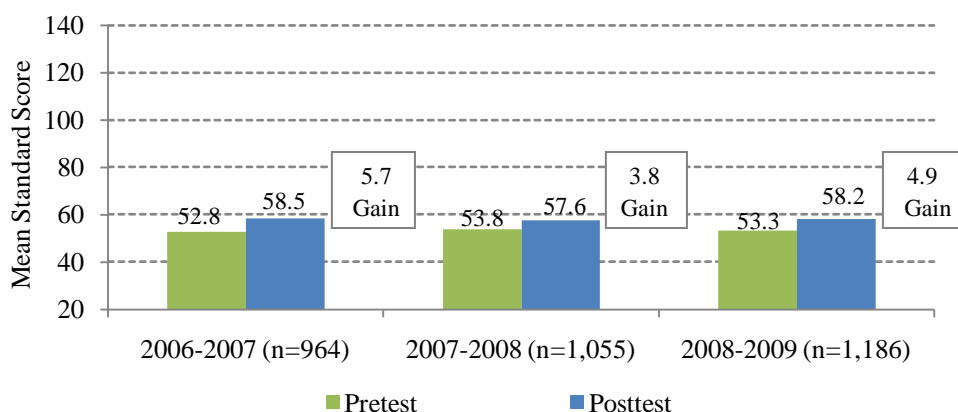
Source. DPE PPVT-III records, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009

Figure 7. Average Pretest and Posttest Scores for Spanish ELL Pre-K Students Tested on TVIP, 2004–2005 through 2008–2009



Source. DPE TVIP records, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009

Figure 8. Average Pretest and Posttest Scores for Spanish ELLs Tested on PPVT-III, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009 (Baseline Information–PPVT-III Not Normed for Spanish Speakers)



Source. DPE PPVT-III records, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009

The 2008–2009 student achievement data for pre-K students provides some evidence that the pre-K program was effective. Pre-K students made gains in receptive vocabulary that were about twice the expected growth found on the national tests in a 7-month period when tested in the language of instruction. In addition, 81% of all pre-K students in the testing sample scored in the average range at the posttest when tested in the language of instruction. **However, because PPVT-III average gains for English-language students and Spanish ELLs remain low, the need for increased rigor in English vocabulary instruction exists in all classrooms.**

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN OTHER AREAS

The *AISD Pre-K Report Card Assessment Rubrics* (AISD, 2008a), developed by pre-K teachers and piloted in 2004–2005, were designed to provide consistency in scoring students' academic progress on the *Prekindergarten Report to Parents* each 9-week period in oral language, pre-reading/concepts of print, listening, writing, math, science, social studies, ESL, and personal development. The various rubrics were aligned with the district IPGs, the state *Prekindergarten Curriculum Guidelines* (TEA, 1999), and the district-aligned PK–12 Matrix of Essential Knowledge and Skills.

The performance scale used for rating academic progress was as follows: 1 = needs improvement, 2 = basic understanding, 3 = skilled, and 4 = advanced. Being “on grade level” was defined by a score of 3 or 4. The skills evaluated became progressively more difficult each 9 weeks. After collecting feedback from teachers, the Pre-K Assessment Task Force implemented changes to improve the rigor on the rubrics used during the 2008–2009 school year. Report card data for approximately 4,018 pre-K students who were part of the electronic grade reporting for all 9 weeks in 2008–2009 were analyzed.

In 2008–2009, the academic areas with the highest percentages of students on grade level at the end of the year were social studies (87%), math (85%), and writing (85%) (Table 2). The subject areas that showed the greatest growth from the 1st to 4th 9-weeks included math and science.

Table 2. Pre-K Students on Grade Level in Each Content Area, by 9-Week Period, 2008–2009

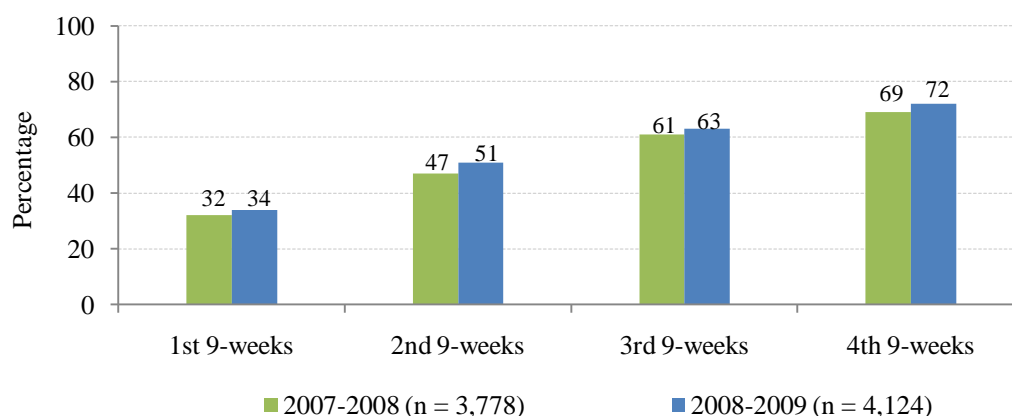
Content area	Percentage of AISD pre-K students on grade level				Change
	1 st 9 weeks	2 nd 9 weeks	3 rd 9 weeks	4 th 9 weeks	1 st to 4 th 9 weeks
Oral language (n =4,017)	67	80	75	80	+27
Listening (n = 4,018)	66	69	71	81	+15
Pre-reading (n = 4,017)	58	76	80	80	+22
Writing (n = 4, 016)	66	79	80	85	+19
Math (n = 4, 018)	46	65	81	85	+39
Science (n = 4,128)	50	67	70	83	+33
Social studies (n = 3,932)	62	71	85	87	+25
ESL (n = 2,427)	20	32	42	46	+26

Source. GradeSpeed reporting software data, as reported by pre-K teachers, 2008–2009

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social development for a 4-year-old is important for success in kindergarten. Using teachers' ratings of how often students exhibited a variety of traits including working with others, exhibiting fine and gross motor skills, following directions, accepting responsibility, and participating in class, personal development scores (1 = *rarely*, 2 = *occasionally*, 3 = *frequently*, and 4 = *consistently*) were analyzed for students ($n = 4,124$) with grades for each 9-week period. As with academic performance, a score of 3 or 4 indicated meeting expectations. Figure 9 shows that 34% of pre-K students in the sample received scores of 3 or 4 in all personal development traits at the end of the first 9-week period in 2008–2009. By the end of the school year, 72% of the students met expectations for student behavior on all personal development traits (compared with 69% in 2007–2008).

Figure 9. Pre-K Students Receiving a Score of 3 or 4 on All Personal Development Traits, by 9-Week Period, 2007–2008 and 2008–2009



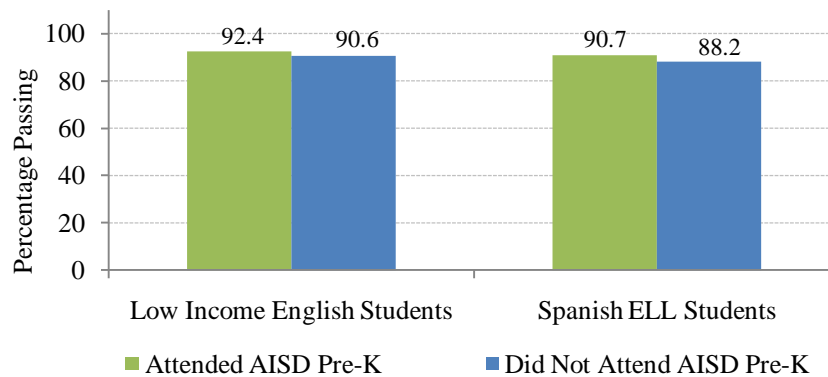
Source. GradeSpeed grade reporting software data, 2007–2008 and 2008–2009

LONG-TERM IMPACT ON READING AND MATH

A review of 2009 grade 3 TAKS reading and math data for students who attended AISD pre-K in 2004–2005 provided information about the possible long-term impact of the pre-K program on reading and math achievement. Because students must qualify to be eligible for public school pre-K, TAKS results were analyzed by language and income. Long-term impact on reading and math findings included the following:

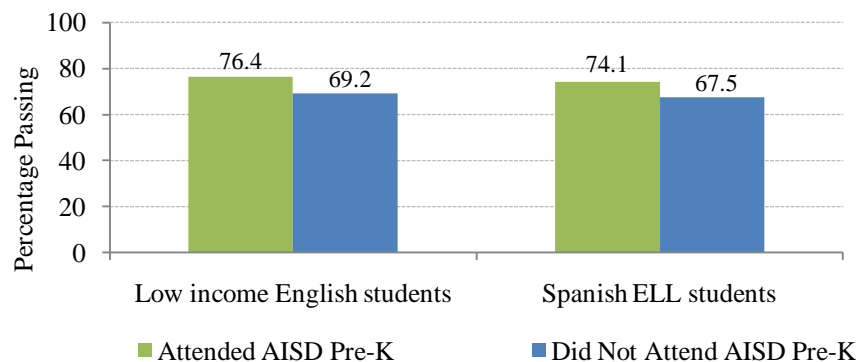
- The percentages of low-income and Spanish ELLs in the AISD pre-K group that passed **TAKS reading** (92.4% and 90.7%, respectively) were slightly higher than the percentages for the group that did not attend pre-K (90.6% and 88.2%, respectively) (Figure 10).
- The percentages of low-income and Spanish ELLs in the AISD pre-K group that passed **TAKS math** (76.4% and 74.1%, respectively) were higher than the percentages for the group that did not attend pre-K (69.2% and 67.5%, respectively) (Figure 11).
- The differences between TAKS results for the two groups of students were higher for math (7 points) than for reading (2 points) (Figures 10 and 11).

Figure 10. Students Passing 2009 Grade 3 TAKS Reading, by AISD Pre-K Attendance in 2004–2005



Source. AISD SASI student records and 2009 TAKS reading data

Figure 11. Students Passing 2009 Grade 3 TAKS Math, by AISD Pre-K Attendance in 2004–2005



Source. AISD SASI student records and 2009 TAKS math data

Although it is not possible to attribute these differences entirely to pre-K attendance for these students because other grades and teachers could have influenced their achievement, these results indicate that pre-K attendance in AISD may be positively associated with subsequent student achievement, especially in math, for English-language low-income students and for Spanish ELLs.

**READ PREKINDERGARTEN DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL:
REFLECTION AFTER 3 YEARS**

AISD opened its first pre-K center in 2006–2007, and 421 4-year-olds were transported by bus from their home schools of Cook, McBee, and Walnut Creek to the Read pre-K center to relieve overcrowding at those campuses. The goals of the pre-K program at Read are to support the physical, emotional, and cognitive development of 4-year-olds. The facility has a library, cafeteria, science laboratory, and indoor and outdoor play equipment built specifically to meet the needs of 4-year-olds.

The 2008–2009 Read enrollment of 620 students represented a 47% growth since it opened in 2006–2007. According to AISD student records, demographic information for Read pre-K students included the following:

- Gender was balanced, with 51% male and 49% female (compared with 50% and 50%, respectively, for district pre-K).
- Ninety-six percent of students ($n = 597$) were from low-income families (compared with 94% for district pre-K). Even so, Read does not receive Title I funds.
- Seventy-five percent of students ($n = 464$) were ELLs whose home language was not English (compared with 59% for district pre-K).
- Seventy-one percent ($n = 446$) of students met both the LEP and low-income criteria (compared with 54% for district pre-K).
- Hispanic students comprised 84% of the Read student body, followed by 10% African American, 3% Asian, and 2% Anglo/other (compared with 79%, 11%, 4% and 6%, respectively, for the district) students.

The Read enrollment increased from 421 students the first year to 645 in 2007–2008 and 620 in 2008–2009, as a result of the addition of students from Wooldridge. Table 3 shows a 3-year summary of Read data.

Table 3. Read Pre-K Summary Information, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009

	2006- 2007	2007- 2008	2008- 2009
Number of teachers	22	31	32
Number of pre-K students	421	645	620
Number of low-income students	391	587	597
Number of ELLs	292	485	464

Source. AISD student and human resource records, 2006–2007 through 2008–2009

Note. Students can be both low income and ELL.

Academic Initiatives and Community Partnerships

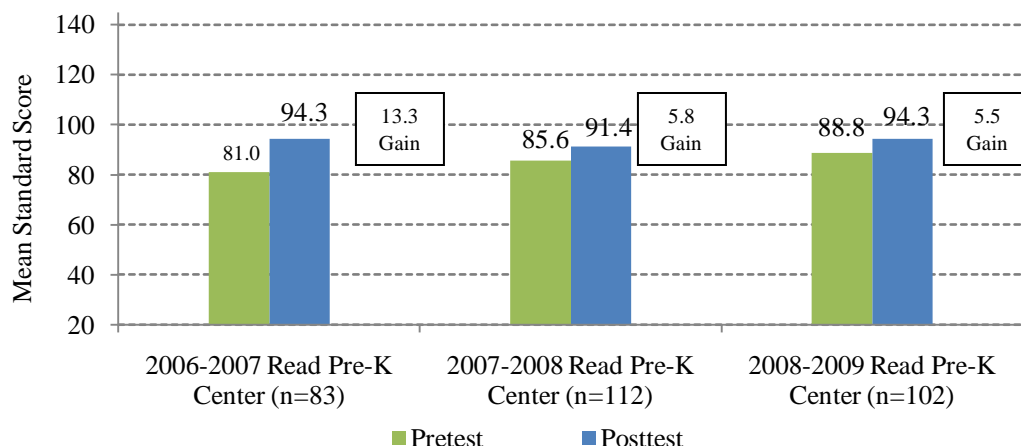
Read staff continued the following academic initiatives in the 2008–2009 school year: focus on inquiry-based science instruction, and full-inclusion preschool program for children with disabilities (PPCD). Community partnerships at Read, described earlier in the report, included the following: ASPIRE Family Literacy Program, which provided ESL and parenting classes for parents in the Read attendance area; the ACCESS grant, which funded a full-time counselor; and AmeriCorps, whose participants provided small group instruction, assisted with learning activities in the science lab and the library, and helped with adult literacy and ESL classes for parents.

PPVT-III AND TVIP RESULTS FOR READ PRE-K STUDENTS

As part of a district program research plan to do a long-term follow-up study on AISD students in early elementary years, students in all Read classrooms were tested with the PPVT-III, and the Spanish ELLs were tested with the TVIP. Of the 2,066 pre-K students with valid pre- and posttests, 475 were students at Read (102 in English only and 373 in English and Spanish). The following is a summary of results for Read students, as compared with results for other district pre-K program students.

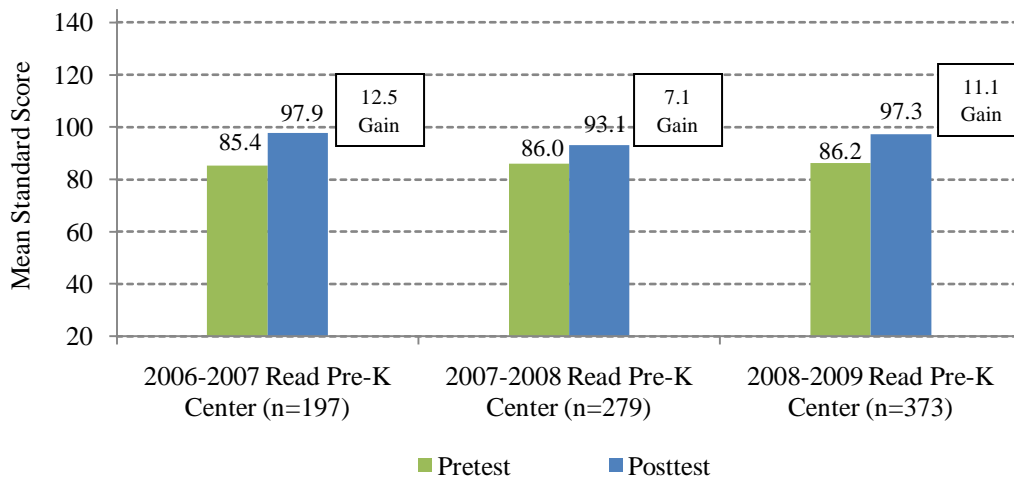
- Eighty-two percent of Read pre-K students who were tested made gains from pretest to posttest when tested in their language of instruction, compared with 73% for pre-K students from schools other than Read.
- Eighty-two percent of Read pre-K students were in the average range (85 to 115 standard score points) at the posttest when tested in their language of instruction, compared with 81% for pre-K students from schools other than Read.
- The average growth in receptive vocabulary during the 7-month period for Read was 1 year, 1 month for English-language students and 1 year, 3 months for Spanish-language ELLs (1 year, 1 month and 1 year, 2 months, respectively for pre-K students at schools other than Read).
- After declining in 2007–2008, the average PPVT-III and TVIP posttest scores for Read pre-K students increased in 2008–2009 (Figures 12 through 14).

Figure 12. PPVT-III Pretest and Posttest Comparison for English Language Pre-K Students at Read Pre-K Center, 2006-2007 through 2008-2009



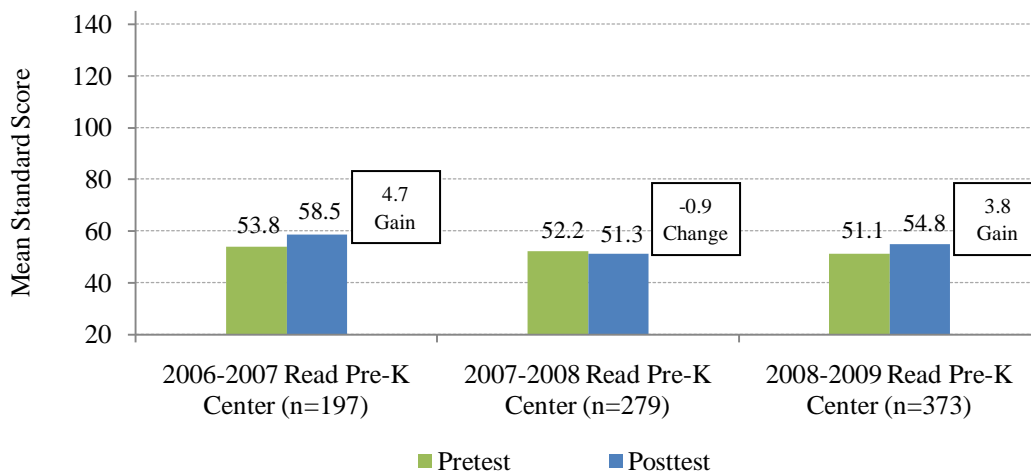
Source. DPE PPVT-III and TVIP 2006–2007 through 2008–2009 records

Figure 13. TVIP Pretest and Posttest Comparison for Spanish Language Pre-K Students at Read Pre-K Center, 2006-2007 through 2008-2009



Source. DPE PPVT-III and TVIP 2006–2007 through 2008–2009 records

Figure 14. PPVT-III Results for Spanish Language Pre-K Students at Read, 2006-2007 through 2008-2009 (Baseline Information–PPVT-III Not Normed for Spanish Speakers)



Source. DPE PPVT-III and TVIP 2006–2007 through 2008–2009 records

Note. TVIP is not normed for Spanish ELLs.

TEACHER SURVEYS: WHAT DO TEACHERS THINK?

In April 2009, pre-K teachers gave input about the effectiveness of the pre-K program through the online 2008–2009 Prekindergarten Teacher Survey. Specific topics included professional development opportunities, curriculum and materials, assessment rubric, electronic report card, and district support for the pre-K program. A separate teacher survey was sent to Read teachers, with some questions specific to the third year of the pre-K center. A total of 217 pre-K teachers (25 from Read and 192 from other schools, or a response rate of 70%) responded to the teacher surveys. Teacher feedback was shared with program managers.

STRENGTHS OF THE PRE-K PROGRAM

In April 2009, pre-K teachers were asked to reflect on the school year and to describe areas of strength for the program. The perceived success of the pre-K program is evident from the 99.5% of teachers who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “Most of my students will be ready for kindergarten at the end of the pre-K year.” Pre-K teachers ($n = 192$) at schools other than Read reported the following major program strengths.

- **Benefit of full-day pre-K program ($n = 39$).** Teachers praised AISD’s dedication to the full-day pre-K program. As one teacher explained, “The pre-K program creates learners. It helps the children prepare for kindergarten by giving them a social base where they learn to be in control of their environment by following directions and making good decisions. The pre-K program also lays a foundation of knowledge in primary academic skills so that the expectations of kindergarten are not overwhelming.”
- **Curriculum/Assessment resources ($n = 35$).** Teachers were appreciative of the quality curriculum resources, assessment rubrics, and IPGs to guide instruction.
- **Strong administrative support ($n = 28$).** Teachers praised the leadership of the early childhood specialists who provided training and offered solutions to problems. As one teacher said, “The pre-K administration really works to meet the needs of the teachers and children.” Another teacher showed appreciation in the statement “The teachers have been included in creating policies and in the decision making process. The district administrators have also been great advocates for students.”
- **Professional development opportunities ($n = 20$).** Pre-K teachers reported the importance of professional development opportunities designed specifically to meet their classroom needs. Many of the professional development opportunities were presented by teachers who had participated in the TEEM project.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Although teachers offered praise for the pre-K program, they also had suggestions for program improvements. According to the 92 pre-K teachers at schools other than Read who made comments, the following areas were most in need of improvement.

- **Parent involvement ($n = 26$).** Many teachers asked for good ideas for increasing parents’ involvement with their child’s education.
- **Practices and Procedures ($n = 21$).** Many teachers expressed frustration with district policies and practices regarding the pre-K program.
- **Class size ($n = 19$).** To successfully prepare disadvantaged students for kindergarten, many teachers stated that a lower student-to-teacher ratio is needed.

SUMMARY

AISD is committed to improving early learning for disadvantaged 4-year-olds by providing a full-day program with a highly qualified teacher for each pre-K classroom. In 2008–2009, 5,196 4-year-olds attended pre-K at 66 campuses. The two program eligibility criteria most often met were LEP and economically disadvantaged requirements. In 2008–2009, 94% of students were from low-income families, 59% were ELLs, and 54% qualified by both income and language.

The district uses the PPVT-III and TVIP assessments on a sample of district pre-K students to evaluate student progress in language and literacy. Growth in receptive vocabulary is measured from pretest to posttest on the one-on-one assessment.

- Seventy percent of English-language students made gains from pretest to posttest on the PPVT-III, and 79% of Spanish ELLs made gains on the TVIP.
- Gains for English-language students on the PPVT-III and for Spanish ELLs on the TVIP indicate students showed growth about two times greater than that expected for 4-year-olds after a 7-month period of instruction.
- At the posttest, 81% ($n = 1,596$) of all students scored in the average range on tests in their language of instruction (80% in Spanish and 83% in English).

A review of 2009 grade 3 TAKS reading and math data for students who attended AISD pre-K in 2004–2005 provided information about the possible long-term impact of the pre-K program on reading and math achievement. Results of 2009 TAKS reading and math scores indicated that students who attended pre-K had higher TAKS reading and TAKS math passing rates than did those who did not attend pre-K, when compared by income and language. The differences between TAKS results for the two groups of students were higher for math (7 points) than for reading (2 points). Although progress in student achievement has been made, much remains to be done if the students attending pre-K are to be successful in school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although state and grant funding do not cover the entire cost of full-day pre-K for disadvantaged 4-year-olds, the AISD Board of Trustees made the commitment to continue the full-day pre-K program in 2009–2010. Each year when budget cuts are required, the possibility of returning to half-day pre-K is raised. However, with 54% of the 2008–2009 pre-K students qualifying by language and income, the need is evident for a full-day of instruction to prepare these students for success in kindergarten and beyond. District research has shown that gains for full-day pre-K students were significantly greater than gains for half-day students, especially for LEP students, in the 3 years prior to 2002-2003, the year all classes became full day (Curry, 2002). The following recommendations are offered for consideration:

- Commit the necessary resources to provide a high-quality pre-K program for disadvantaged 4-year-olds to ensure their future success in school.
- Support developmentally appropriate practices for pre-K, while insisting on the academic rigor required for these 4-year-olds to read on grade level by grade.
- Expand collaboration with community organizations to provide opportunities for integrated services for pre-K students and their families.
- Provide high-quality staff development opportunities to district pre-K teachers and community partners that will help them accelerate learning for their students.
- Provide additional resources and training to accelerate English-language learning in all pre-K classrooms.
- Consider creating an attendance zone for Read in order to receive Title I funds, which are currently unavailable even though 94% of Read students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: 2008–2009 AISD PRE-K PROGRAMS: NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND CAMPUS FUNDING

Schools	# Pre-K students served	Title I schools	Pre-K Expansion grant schools*
Allan	48	X	X
Allison	67	X	X
Andrews	96	X	X
Barrington	167	X	X
Becker	32	X	X
Blackshear	38	X	X
Blanton	84	X	
Blazier	77	X	
Boone	43		
Brentwood	33		X
Brooke	55	X	X
Brown	79	X	X
Campbell	57	X	X
Casey	62	X	X
Casis	16		
Cowan	36		
Cunningham	51		X
Davis	36		
Dawson	34	X	X
Doss	33		
Galindo	111	X	X
Govalle	77	X	X
Graham	111	X	X
Harris	136	X	X
Hart	151	X	
Hill	15		
Houston	153	X	X
Jordan	114	X	X
Joslin	40	X	
Kocurek	54	X	X
Langford	121	X	X
Linder	148	X	X
Maplewood	35		X
Mathews	42		X
Menchaca	64		X
Metz	82	X	X
Mills	74		

Schools	# Pre-K students served	Title I Schools	Expansion Grant Schools*
Norman	43	X	X
Oak Hill	57		X
Oak Springs	41	X	X
Odom	90	X	
Ortega	54	X	X
Overton	122	X	
Palm	62	X	X
Patton	40		
Pecan Springs	84	X	X
Perez	93	X	
Pickle	112	X	X
Pillow	71		
Pleasant Hill	92	X	
Read **	598		
Reilly	38	X	X
Ridgetop	31	X	X
Rodriguez	104	X	
Sanchez	89	X	X
Sims	43	X	X
St Elmo	48	X	
Summitt	75		X
Sunset Valley	60	X	X
Travis Heights	65	X	X
Widen	107	X	X
Williams	71	X	
Winn	46	X	X
Wooten	102	X	X
Zavala	57	X	X
Zilker	29		X
Total (66 schools)	5,196	48	45

Source. AISD program evaluation pre-K student records, 2008–2009

Note. Elementary schools without pre-K programs in 2008–2009 were Baranoff, Barton Hills, Bryker Woods, Clayton, Cook, Gullett, Highland Park, Kiker, Lee, McBee, Pease, Walnut Creek, and Wooldridge.

* Forty-seven schools were part of the original Prekindergarten Expansion Grant in 2001–2002. The schools that moved to full-day programs after 2002–2003 were not part of the grant. Local and federal funds are used to supplement the pre-K budget.

** Read Pre-K Center served students from 4 Title I schools: Cook, McBee, Walnut Creek, and Wooldridge.

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