# A Summary of Austin Independent School District's Optional Extended Year Program Activities, 2008–2009

The Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP), a state-funded grant, provides extended learning opportunities for students in kindergarten through Grade 12 who are at risk of academic failure. The primary focus of OEYP is to reduce and eliminate the need for student grade-level retention by providing additional instructional time for students to master the state's academic performance standards (Texas Education Code Sections 42.152 & 29.082). OEYP activities occur outside of the regular school day. Programs are designed to accommodate four school-day options: (a) extended day, (b) extended week, (c) intersession for year-round schools, and (d) summer school. A school district may provide instructional services during any of these programs for a period of time not to exceed 30 days. Participating students must receive a minimum of 240 minutes of instruction to meet the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reporting requirements. Since 1993, the Austin Independent School District (AISD) has used OEYP to reduce the number of AISD students at risk of academic failure.

TEA sets the guidelines for grade promotion through OEYP and provides OEY program policies regarding class size (i.e., no more than 16 students to a class and no fewer than eight); attendance (i.e., a minimum of 240 minutes); staff development training; and parental involvement.

## Acknowledgements

A number of people worked with the AISD Department of Program Evaluation (DPE) to develop and implement the 2008–2009 OEYP evaluation. Many thanks go to AISD Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) staff, AISD Support Services staff, Finance staff, principals, program managers, and grant staff.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION, EVALUATION OBJECTIVES, AND SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

In Spring 2009, an electronic survey was sent to the principals ($n = 55$) whose campuses participated in OEYP during the 2008–2009 school year. Seventy-eight percent ($n = 43$) completed the survey, but not all respondents answered every survey item. The evaluation included information from their responses to survey questions about program strategies, staff development training sessions, parent involvement, program information, curricula, expectations for success, and use of OEYP funds. Other program data (e.g., expenditures, student participation, and promotion data) were gathered from AISD staff in the Office of Finance and the PEIMS Department.

The evaluation focused on five specific objectives relevant to district reporting needs:

- To document and report AISD's OEYP activities, per state law
- To report student participation and academic outcomes
- To summarize the participation of parents in AISD's OEYP activities
- To gather information from OEYP principals regarding program implementation, including curriculum and expectations for program participants
- To provide AISD decision makers, principals, program managers, and other school staff with 2008–2009 program data to enhance the operation of AISD's 2009–2010 program, and recommendations for use of OEYP funds

## PROGRAM CONFIGURATION AND COST

During 2008–2009, OEYP funds supported activities on 55 AISD campuses (38 elementary and 17 middle schools) between November 2008 and August 2009. During the regular school year, programs provided accelerated supplemental services, including literacy and mathematics instruction, to students in Grades 3 through 5, whose program eligibility scores were 50% or less of items correct on the beginning of the year (BOY) benchmark tests for reading, mathematics, or both. In Grades 6 through 8, reading and mathematics interventions or remediation instructions were provided to students who were at risk of failing a grade due to credit loss or poor attendance. In the summer, an accelerated instructional program was provided to incoming 9th graders ($n = 337$) who failed the 8th-grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in mathematics but were promoted by their grade placement committee (GPC).[1] All OEYPs included parental involvement activities; staff development sessions for teachers; and student performance evaluations (i.e., attendance, pre- and posttest information, classroom performance, and promotion and retention information).

### Program Strategies

In Fall 2008, AISD curriculum staff developed an OEYP curriculum of structured classes for 2008–2009 program participants that incorporated an interdisciplinary program and required staff to deliver the materials at a rigorous, accelerated pace, and to provide additional

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[1] Counts for these students are not included in the promotion/retention data because these students already were promoted to the next grade (9th) by GPC at the time of services.

instructional time before school, after school, or on Saturdays. The OEYP official start date was October 2008. Table 1 shows the TEA-defined program strategies and their reported use by principals who held OEYPs at their schools.

Table 1. Principals' Self-Reported Use of Program Strategies in the
Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP), 2008–2009

| Areas of program focus | Program strategies used most often |
|---|---|
| Accelerated reading instruction (ARI) | 91% |
| Reading or language arts programs | 91% |
| Mathematics and/or science programs | 86% |
| Accelerated math instruction (AMI) | 86% |
| English as a second language (ESL) | 86% |
| Problem solving | 84% |
| Readiness for next grade | 77% |
| Follow-up activities | 74% |
| Integration of technology | 63% |
| Parent partnerships | 63% |
| Interdisciplinary program strategies | 61% |
| Mentoring | 58% |

*Source.* OEYP Principal Survey results (AISD, 2009a)

**Staff Development Sessions**

Principals ($n = 43$) reported offering staff development sessions for their teachers prior to implementation of OEYP. Staff development topics mentioned most often by principals were:

- Questioning strategies ($n = 41$)
- Researched-based practices ($n = 40$)
- Teaching strategies in content area ($n = 39$)
- Accelerated instruction ($n = 37$)
- Assessment strategies ($n = 36$)
- Grouping patterns ($n = 32$)
- Learning styles ($n = 31$)
- Cultural and linguistic diversity ($n = 30$)

Other topics mentioned were integrating technologies ($n = 29$), interdisciplinary instruction ($n = 28$), mentoring ($n = 26$), and team teaching ($n = 26$).

**Parent Involvement**

When principals were asked how they informed parents that OEYP was available to their child or children, the majority (91%, $n = 39$) said they used letters to parents and parent-teacher conferences. Survey results indicated that a duplicated count of 21,769 parents participated in

OEYP activities during school year 2008–2009. Principals reported the following as examples of activities used most often to involve parents of students participating in their campus OEYP: literacy activities, conferences, coffees, and workshops. Table 2 shows parent attendance at the parent involvement activities most frequently reported by principals (*n* = 43) responding to the survey. A separate event listing is available from AISD DPE records. See Table 7 for additional data on OEYP parent involvement between 2000–2001 and 2008–2009.

Table 2. Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP) Parent Involvement Activities
Reported Most Often by Principals, 2008–2009

| Activity | Number of parents participating |
|---|---|
| **Literacy fairs and nights (mathematics, reading, science)** | 8,873 |
| **Parent teacher conferences** | 7,776 |
| **Coffee talks with principal, and parent-teacher conferences** | 2,115 |
| **Parent workshops** | 1,477 |
| **Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) workshops** | 1,178 |
| **Small-group parent involvement activities\*** | 350 |
| **TOTAL** | **21,769** |

*Source.* OEYP Principal Survey results (AISD, 2009a)
\* Small-group parent activities were too numerous to list individually.

When principals were asked whether their campuses provided parents with services and other activities to increase parent involvement on their campuses, 93% (*n* = 39) reported using conferences with parents. A majority of principals also reported using materials and conducting meetings in the home language of the parents (84%, *n* = 36); parent training about study skills strategies and how to assist with their child's homework assignments (72%, *n* = 31); parent training about reinforcing reading skills at home (58%, *n* = 25); and surveying parents to help determine program needs (54%, *n* = 23). Forty-two percent (*n* = 18) of principals reported providing parent training about technology and making mathematics manipulatives to enhance student learning. Some reported including parents as partners in developing their OEYPs (40%, *n* = 17); using child care for parents to allow involvement in activities (33%, *n* = 14); and asking parents to serve as teacher assistants in classroom and extension services (30%, *n* = 13).

**Program Cost**

AISD's OEYP budget allocation was $385,699 for September 1, 2008 through August 31, 2009. Recorded expenditures showed 89% ($342,768) was expended for instructional staff and associated costs (e.g., the Federal Insurance Contributions Act [FICA], workers' compensation, and teacher retirement); 3% ($10,518) for other costs (i.e., student field trips,

student meals, and refreshments for parent involvement activities); and 2% ($9,078) for instructional supplies and materials.

### PROGRAM INFORMATION, CURRICULA, AND EXPECTATIONS FOR SUCCESS

Table 3 shows principals' ratings on items related to the adequacy of the program's planning and implementation.

Table 3. Principals' Ratings of the Adequacy of Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP) Information, Curricula, and Expectations for Success, 2008–2009

| OEYP planning and implementation | Percentage agreeing |
|---|---|
| The rigor/pace of the curriculum's delivery was comfortable | 95% |
| School staff was comfortable with entering and reporting Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) attendance data from the campus level | 95% |
| I received adequate information about the OEYP grant that funded the Optional Extended Year Program at my school | 93% |
| Communication with OEYP program managers was adequate | 90% |
| PEIMS staff provided school staff with adequate training on data entry and reporting | 90% |
| My expectations for student success were met | 88% |
| I received adequate information about the OEYP budget and program funding dates | 85% |
| Parent involvement at my school for students participating in the OEYP classes was good | 63% |

*Source.* OEYP Principal Survey results (AISD, 2009a)

Although the majority of principals agreed with the items relating to OEYP planning and implementation, the response rate for the last item in Table 3 on parent involvement raises a concern. A review of the response ratings for this item found that of the 17 principals who did not agree with the last statement, 24% (*n* = 10*)* were undecided about the value of parent involvement on their campuses, 12% (*n* = 5*)* disagreed that parent involvement was good on their campuses, and 5% *(n* = 2*)* did not respond to the item. These responses cause concern because (a) schools are required by state and federal law to include parent involvement in supplementary academic activities, (b) parent involvement is a key element of AISD's efforts to enhance students' academic and social success, and (c) the majority of these schools previously participated in OEYP.

## PRINCIPALS' COMMENTS OR RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT USE OF OEYP FUNDS

When principals were asked to make comments or recommendations about how the district might enhance the use of OEYP funds, 35% *(n = 15)* responded. Of the respondents, 40% (*n* = 6) were complimentary in their remarks regarding the district's high level of support for OEYP, and 33% (*n* = 5) made recommendations about the distribution and use of OEYP funds (e.g., distribution of funds earlier during the school year so planning for activities could take place earlier, and year-round use of the funds). Three principals indicated they liked the program as it currently operates and had no comments or recommendations. Another responded that the program did not seem to offer the students as much academic support as it did in prior years. Finally, one wanted to know if funds could be used without writing individual campus proposals for the funds (as required by district grant administration).

## PROGRAM COMPLETION, STUDENT PROMOTION, AND RETENTION

Principals and teachers in OEYP completed records that showed whether OEYP students on their campuses were to be promoted or retained, based on the students' academic work and attendance. An electronic copy of AISD's *PEIMS Edit + Reports Data Review* (AISD, 2009b) showed that 3,623 students attended at least 1 day of an OEY program in 2008–2009. Of that number, 95.5% (*n* = 3,460) were promoted, 1.9% (*n* = 71) were retained, and 2.5% (*n* = 92) were served by OEYP but officially withdrew from the district prior to the end of the school year. Promotion, retention, and withdrawal data for 2008–2009 as defined by the following TEA codes, are shown in Table 4 on the following page:

Code 1. The student was promoted to the next grade level and met both the district's 90% attendance and academic promotion criteria.

Code 2. The student was promoted to the next grade level based on district policy, but did not meet the 90% attendance requirement.

Code 3. The student was promoted to the next grade level based on district policy, but did not meet the district's promotion criteria.

Code 4. The student was promoted to the next grade level, but did not meet the attendance or promotion criteria.

Code 5. The student was retained due to parental request.

Code 6. The student was retained for reasons other than parental request.

Code 7. The student was served, but officially withdrew from the district prior to the end of the school year.

Table 4. Promotion, Retention, and Withdrawal Data for Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP) Students, 2008–2009

| Grade level | Number of students by promotion code | | | | Number of students retained | | Number of students withdrawn | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Total |
| Kindergarten | 108 | 6 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 136 |
| 1 | 148 | 7 | 84 | 4 | 7 | 16 | 6 | 272 |
| 2 | 201 | 18 | 51 | 3 | 1 | 14 | 10 | 298 |
| 3 | 298 | 15 | 22 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 14 | 363 |
| 4 | 625 | 39 | 109 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 19 | 804 |
| 5 | 448 | 48 | 101 | 15 | 0 | 3 | 20 | 635 |
| 6 | 319 | 34 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 361 |
| 7 | 184 | 37 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 235 |
| 8 | 419 | 37 | 31 | 22 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 519 |
| **Total** | **2,750** | **241** | **417** | **52** | **18** | **53** | **92** | **3,623** |

*Source.* Public Education Information Management System Edit + Reports Data Review, 2008–2009 OEYP Extended Collection and Resubmission Results (AISD, 2009b)

Of the number promoted, 14% ($n = 469$) were placements. Placements occur when students who do not meet the district's academic criteria for promotion are placed at the next grade level by the unanimous decision of the GPC, based on district policy. Table 5 provides a review of AISD OEYP placement data across Grades 3 through 5 for 2006–2007, 2007–2008, and 2008–2009. The highest placement numbers during these years were at Grade 5. The Grade 5 placements raise concerns because these students became 6th graders and transitioned to middle school the following year without meeting the program's criteria for academic success at the 5th grade level.

Table 5. AISD Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP) Grade Placement for Grades 3 Through 5, 2006–2007 to 2008–2009

| Year | Grade | Total number of students enrolled | Number of regular students promoted | Number of students placed | Percentage of students placed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2006–2007** | 3 | 943 | 224 | 15 | 7% |
| | 4 | 766 | 592 | 163 | 28% |
| | 5 | 917 | 556 | 337 | 61% |
| **2007–2008** | 3 | 1,463 | 1,165 | 233 | 20% |
| | 4 | 1,109 | 822 | 266 | 32% |
| | 5 | 1,260 | 883 | 349 | 40% |
| **2008–2009** | 3 | 363 | 313 | 25 | 8% |
| | 4 | 804 | 664 | 111 | 17% |
| | 5 | 635 | 496 | 116 | 23% |
| **TOTAL** | | **8,260** | **5,715** | **1,615** | **26%** |

*Source.* Public Education Information Management System Edit + Reports Data Review, 2007, 2008, 2009 Extended Collection and Resubmission Results (AISD, 2007, 2008, 2009b)

A review of historical OEYP data found that AISD had an average promotion rate of 96% ($n = 36,810$) among OEYP students ($n = 38,344$) served in the past 9 years, and that the majority of

students were served during the fall and spring semesters. Table 6 shows more information regarding students promoted in OEYP from 2000–2001 to 2008–2009.

Table 6. AISD Students Served and Promoted in Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP), 2000–2001 Through 2008–2009

| School year | Grade level ranges served | School semester | Number of students served | Percentage of students promoted |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2000–2001 | K-8 | Intersession and summer | 3,518 | 96 |
| 2001–2002 | 3-8 | Summer | 2,609 | 95 |
| 2002–2003 | 4-8 | Spring and summer | 2,312 | 97 |
| 2003–2004 | 3-8 | Spring and summer | 3,565 | 97 |
| 2004–2005 | K-12 | Fall and spring | 4,006 | 94 |
| 2005–2006 | K-12 | Fall and spring | 8,428 | 96 |
| 2006–2007 | K-8 | Spring | 4,473 | 97 |
| 2007–2008 | K-8 | Fall, spring, and summer | 5,810 | 96 |
| 2008–2009 | K-8 | Fall, spring, and summer | 3,623 | 96 |
| **TOTAL** | | | **38,344** | **96** |

*Source.* Washington, Doolittle, & Williams (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008)

OEYP parent involvement data were available for the same period (2000–2001 to 2008–2009) and were included in the same review. As shown in Table 7, the program actively involved large numbers of parents in a variety of OEYP activities during this same 9-year period, with 2007–2008 parent involvement counts being the greatest, compared with those of prior years and the current year. A review of the data for peak parental involvement (2005–2006 through 2008–2009) found the majority of principals reported using the following activities most often to involve parents in activities at their campuses: sending out flyers and letters, making phone calls, holding parent teacher conferences, providing materials and meetings in the home language of parents to encourage the participation of ESL parents, and offering child care.

Table 7. Parents Involved in the Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP) Activities, 2000–2001 Through 2008–2009

| School year | Percentage of parents involved (duplicated count) |
|---|---|
| 2000–2001 | 2,909 |
| 2001–2002 | 2,420 |
| 2002–2003 | 3,917 |
| 2003–2004 | 4,005 |
| 2004–2005 | 5,820 |
| 2005–2006 | 14,459 |
| 2006–2007 | 15,264 |
| 2007–2008 | 43,112 |
| 2008–2009 | 21,769 |

*Source.* Washington, Doolittle, & Williams (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008)

*Note.* Parents could attend more than one event; therefore, the total participation count for this period includes duplicates.

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Principals' responses to survey questions indicated they were in compliance with the following TEA OEYP policies:

- providing training for accelerated instructional staff,
- using state-designated curricula and approved instructional strategies,
- notifying parents about the availability of the program, and
- involving parents in various OEYP activities.

However, some responding principals disagreed about parent involvement issues, which raised several concerns. Concerns include the following: (a) schools are required by state and federal law to include parent involvement in supplementary academic activities, (b) the majority of these schools previously participated in OEYP and should have been aware of state mandates governing the involvement of parents, and (c) all principals should be aware of district efforts to promote parent involvement as a key element of AISD's efforts to enhance students' academic and social success. Therefore, it is recommended that program administrators and managers ensure that all participating schools include parent involvement in their OEYP.

OEYP is a state-funded grant that provides extended learning opportunities for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 who are at risk of academic failure, and AISD's program serves as an example of an effective supplemental educational program. Since 2000–2001, the district has used OEYP funds to serve 38,344 students who would have been retained without the benefit of supplemental instruction. Of that number, more than 96% ($n = 36,810$) have been promoted. However, a review of AISD's OEYP placement data across Grades 3 through 5 for school years 2006–2007 through 2008–2009 found that larger numbers of 5th grade students, compared with students at other grade levels, were being placed in the next grade level when they had not mastered the work at their current grade level.

Therefore, it is recommended that district administrators, program managers, and school staff use all available resources to anticipate and make plans to address student placements (i.e., students promoted by district policy) *through sustained, extensive, year-round academic support* that involves guided diagnostic, individualized, and prescriptive instructional intervention activities in the core subject areas (i.e., reading, math, science, social studies). According to recent studies by the Harvard Family Research Project (2008) and Johns Hopkins' National Center for Summer Learning (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007), activities such as these can help span the gap between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next school year. Use of OEYP or other funds to provide out-of-school activities can provide struggling students with strategically planned learning experiences throughout the summer (i.e., when they most likely would be academically disengaged) that prepare them for returning to school.

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