

# Dual Language Program Implementation in Districts Similar to Austin Independent School District

## Introduction

The following report examines three school districts that are similar to Austin Independent School District (AISD) and that are effectively implementing dual language (DL) programs: Dallas ISD, Fort Worth ISD, and Houston ISD. The districts are compared in terms of demographic composition, DL program implementation, and English language learners (ELL) academic performance on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR).

## Demographics

Data on district student demographics were obtained from the Texas Performance Reporting System at the Texas Education Agency website (TEA). The most recent records available correspond to the 2013–2014 assessment year.

Fort Worth ISD was the most similar to AISD in terms of overall number of students. However, percentages of ELL and Hispanic students were similar across the four districts. In addition, the districts had comparably high percentages of children classified as economically disadvantaged and/or at risk (Table 1).

Table 1.

2013–2014 Demographic Composition of Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston Independent School Districts

	AISD	Dallas ISD	Fort Worth ISD	Houston ISD
Total number of students	85,014	159,487	84,360	210,716
English language learner	27%	40%	31%	30%
Economic disadvantage	61%	89%	77%	81%
At risk	56%	66%	62%	69%
African American	8%	23%	23%	25%
Hispanic	60%	70%	63%	62%
White	25%	5%	11%	8%

Source. Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–2014 District Performance.

## Program Implementation

In Table 2, one-way and two-way DL program implementation in the four districts for English-Spanish was compared at a high level using the following characteristics: first year of program implementation, number of schools implementing the one- or two-way program (in 2015–2016), grade levels included in each program, language distribution across grade levels, and language separation across academic subjects. Some of these districts also implement DL in other languages (e.g., Vietnamese).

Table 2

## Dual Language Program Implementation at Austin, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston Independent School Districts

	AISSD	Dallas ISD	Fort Worth ISD	Houston ISD
First year of DL implementation	2010	2006	2007	1994
Number of 1-way DL schools	40	143	59	0
Number of 2-way DL schools	7	20	9	52
Number of 1- & 2-way DL schools	10	-	-	6
Grade levels	Pre-K–5*	Pre-K–5	Pre-K–5	K–12
Language distribution	70/30 in lower grades building to 50/50 by 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	70/30 in lower grades building to 50/50 by 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	Higher ratio of Spanish to English in lower grades building to 50/50 by 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	80/20 in lower grades building to 50/50 by 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade
Language separation	Science & social studies: Spanish Language arts: L1 & L2 Math: English	Science & social studies: Spanish Language arts: L1 & L2 Math: English	Science & social studies: Spanish Language arts: L1 & L2 Math: English	4 <sup>th</sup> grade: Language arts, reading, & math: Spanish Science, social studies, & English literature: English 5 <sup>th</sup> grade: Language arts, reading, math, & science: English Social studies and Spanish literature: Spanish

*Source.* AISD Department of English Language Learners; Dallas ISD Bilingual/English as a Second Language Department; Fort Worth ISD Bilingual/English as a Second Language Department; Houston ISD Multilingual Education Department. *Note.* L1 is native language, and L2 is non-native language or second language. Fort Worth ISD started implementing the 2-way DL program in 2013–2014. \*AISD began the DL program in 6<sup>th</sup> grade in August 2015.

## Student STAAR Performance

In Table 3, a summary is provided of numbers of students by district and program who took STAAR in reading, mathematics (math), and writing, 2013–2014.

Table 3

## Number of ELLs by program taking STAAR Reading, Math, or Writing in 2013–2014

	AISSD			Dallas ISD			Fort Worth ISD			Houston ISD		
	Reading	Math	Writing	Reading	Math	Writing	Reading	Math	Writing	Reading	Math	Writing
Transitional	2,861	2,844	1,411	n<5	n<5	n<5	n<5	n<5	n<5	13,185	13,043	-
1-way DL	1,886	1,884	235	16,354	16,354	5,388	6,046	6,047	2,048	*	*	-
2-way DL	275	276	92	764	764	209	-	-	-	713	713	-
ESL	3,855	3,386	1,277	1,288	1,288	417	1,594	1,597	538	7,899	6,416	-

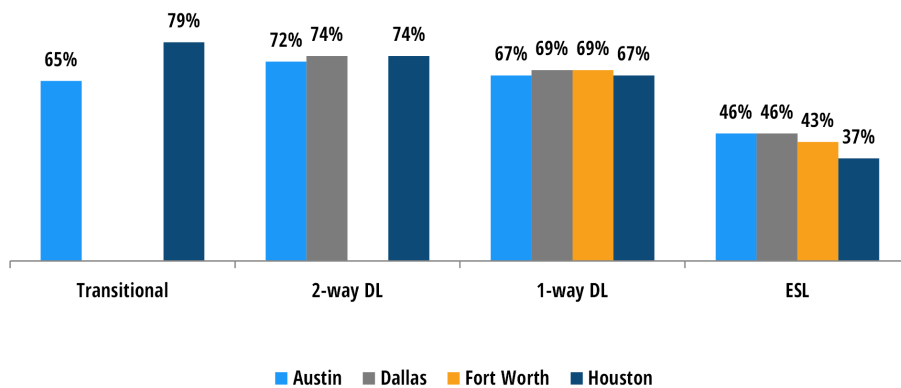
*Source.* ELL performance reports posted at AISD, and Dallas and Houston ISDs websites. Fort Worth data were obtained from their Department of Accountability and Data Quality.

*Note.* Asterisk or hyphen mark indicates no data were available or there were too few students to report to protect privacy.

Houston ISD reported student counts for the 1-way and 2-way programs together, and no counts were reported for ELLs taking the STAAR writing test. Fort Worth ISD counts for all programs included only elementary grades. AISD and Dallas ISD counts for DL programs included only elementary grades, but included elementary and middle school grades for the transitional and ESL programs. Houston ISD counts for all programs included elementary and middle school grades. Fort Worth ISD had no 2-way DL students in testing grades in 2013–2014.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 summarize the percentages of students by program and district who passed the STAAR tests in reading, mathematics (math), and writing during 2013–2014. Results represent students tested in either English or Spanish and the combined grade levels of students tested. Student performance in the bilingual programs (i.e., transitional, 2-way DL, and 1-way DL) was higher than that in ESL programs. Districts did not vary much in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student performance, with the exception of Houston’s transitional students who passed the reading test at a slightly higher level (79%).

**Figure 1. STAAR Reading Met Standard, 2013–2014**



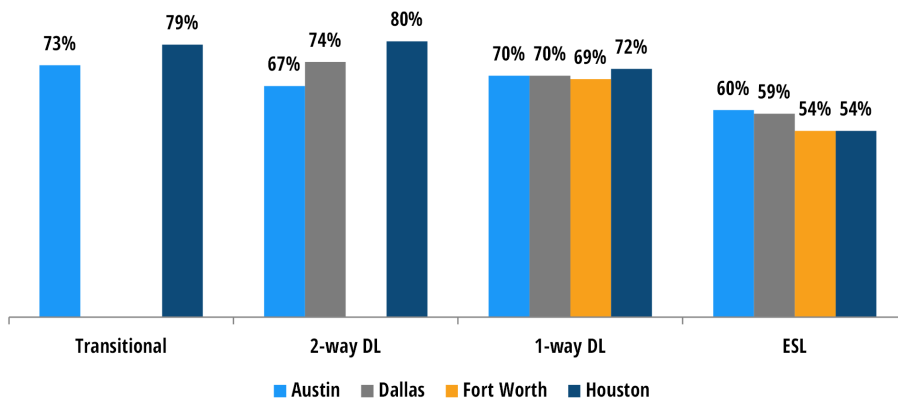
*Source.* Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–2014 District Performance.

*Note.* Includes both test languages. Percentages include all grade levels participating in each type of English learner program and taking the test (i.e., grades 3 and 4 in AISD, grades 3 through 5 in Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs, and grades 3 through 8 in Houston ISD). Some districts implemented DL programs in elementary and secondary schools, while others included only elementary schools. AISD implemented DL programs at grades 3 and 4 during 2013–2014. Fort Worth ISD had no 2-way DL program students tested. Five or fewer students in the transitional program at Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs took STAAR reading; to protect students’ privacy, STAAR data for these groups were omitted from the 2013–2014 Texas Academic Performance Report.

For math, as shown in Figure 2, the data indicate that smaller percentages of two-way DL program students in AISD and Dallas ISD than in Houston ISD met standard. However, this difference must be interpreted with caution because the TEA report included all two-way DL program students in the district, and these districts implemented the DL program at different grade levels. Comparing two-way DL testers in 2013–2014, AISD tested in grades 3 and 4, Dallas ISD tested in grades 3 through 5, and Houston ISD tested in grades 3 through 8. Consequently, the difference found could be a result of comparing the performance of elementary school students in AISD and Dallas ISD with both elementary and middle school students in Houston ISD.

In addition, Houston ISD has been implementing a DL program for over 20 years, whereas AISD has been implementing the DL program for 5 years and Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs for 9 and 8 years respectively. This difference in time implementing the program may also have contributed to the slightly better test performance observed at Houston ISD.

**Figure 2. STAAR Math Met Standard, 2013–2014**

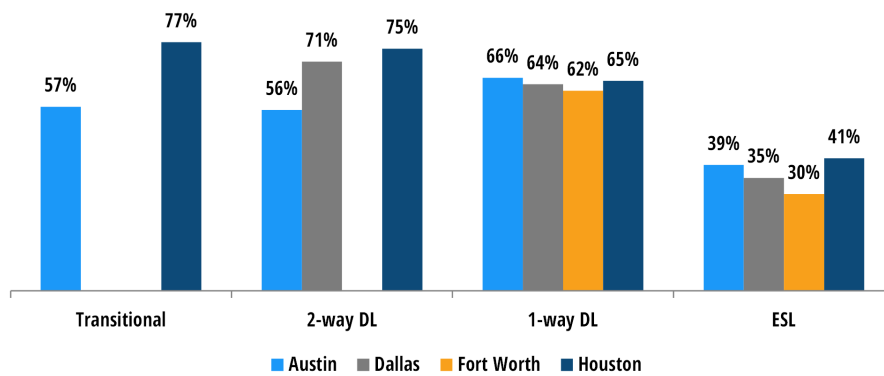


*Source.* Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–2014 District Performance.

*Note.* Includes both test languages. Percentages include all grade levels participating in each type of English learner program and taking the test (i.e., grades 3 and 4 in AISD, grades 3 through 5 in Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs, and grades 3 through 8 in Houston ISD). Some districts implemented DL programs in elementary and secondary schools, while others included only elementary schools. AISD implemented DL programs at grades 3 and 4 during 2013–2014. Fort Worth ISD had no 2-way DL program students tested. Five or fewer students in the transitional program at Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs took STAAR math; to protect students’ privacy, STAAR data for these groups were omitted from the 2013–2014 Texas Academic Performance Report.

Lastly, similar to what was observed for the reading assessment, the Texas Academic Performance Report indicated that a higher percentage of transitional and two-way DL program students at Houston ISD than AISD or Dallas ISD met standard for the writing assessment. Of all students tested, those in the ESL program had the lowest percentages passing.

**Figure 3. STAAR Writing Met Standard, 2013–2014**



*Source.* Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–2014 District Performance.

*Note.* Includes both test languages. Percentages include all grade levels participating in each type of English learner program and taking the STAAR writing test (i.e., grade 4 in AISD, and Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs, and grades 4 and 7 in Houston ISD). Some districts implemented DL programs in elementary and secondary schools, while others included only elementary schools. AISD implemented DL programs at grades 3 and 4 during 2013–2014. Fort Worth ISD had no 2-way DL students tested. Five or fewer students in the transitional program at Dallas and Fort Worth ISDs took STAAR writing; to protect students’ privacy, STAAR data for these groups were omitted from the 2013–2014 Texas Academic Performance

## Summary

The following differences were noticed between the four districts:

- Of all four school districts, Houston ISD has been implementing the DL program for the longest period (20 years) and AISD has been implementing it for the shortest period (5 years). In addition, at Houston ISD all schools are implementing the two-way model (and only a few are also implementing the one-way model). Whereas at the other three schools districts, the majority of schools are implementing the one-way model.
- At AISD, Fort Worth ISD, and Dallas ISD, the DL program is currently implemented only at the elementary school level (prekindergarten [pre-K] through 5<sup>th</sup> grade), although AISD began implementing a DL program in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at three middle schools in August 2015. At Houston, the DL program is implemented in both elementary and secondary schools (pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade).
- AISD offers DL programs in Spanish or Vietnamese and English. Houston ISD offers DL programs in Spanish or Mandarin or Arabic and English. Dallas and Fort Worth offer Spanish and English.
- All four districts separate the two languages by subject area. In AISD, Fort Worth ISD, and Dallas ISD schools offering DL programs, science and social studies are taught in Spanish (or other language), language arts is taught in the students’ native language, and math is taught in English. In Houston ISD schools, language separation by subject area starts in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and changes in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, language arts, reading, and mathematics are taught in Spanish, and science, social studies, and English literature are taught in English. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade, language arts, reading, mathematics, and science are taught in English, and social studies and Spanish literature are taught in Spanish. Note that the language of instruction may or may not correspond with the language of assessment.

## References

- Austin Independent School District (2014, July). AISD guidelines for implementation of the Gómez and Gómez dual language enrichment model. Retrieved from: [http://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dept/ell/docs/AISD\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_the\\_Implementation\\_of\\_G\\_G\\_DL\\_Enrichment\\_Model.pdf](http://www.austinisd.org/sites/default/files/dept/ell/docs/AISD_Guidelines_for_the_Implementation_of_G_G_DL_Enrichment_Model.pdf)
- Vasquez, X. (2015, February). FWISD’s dual language program: DLE program overview. Retrieved from: <http://slideplayer.com/slide/4366718/>

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