PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM, 2011–2012
ISSUE 4: STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Department of Research and Evaluation
AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Research Brief

Background. The state of Texas mandates that districts with at least 15 or more eligible 4-year-old students provide a half-day prekindergarten (pre-K) program to prepare students developmentally for the rigors of kindergarten and beyond. Austin Independent School District (AISD) provides a full-day pre-K program for all children who are 4-years-old on or before September 1st of the current school year and who meet one of the following eligibility criteria: qualify for free or reduced-price lunch program, are English language learner (ELL), are homeless, are the child of an active-duty military member or a military member who was injured or killed in service, or reside or have ever resided in foster care. In addition to the mandated pre-K program, AISD offered for the first time in 2011–2012 a tuition-supported pre-K program. This report (a) summarizes results for students' participation and attendance in the AISD pre-K program during the 2011–2012 school year and (b) provides a cost-per-student estimate.

Student enrollment. A total of 5,525 students were served in AISD's mandated pre-K during 2011–2012, representing less than a 2% decrease in enrollment from 5,614 students in 2010–2011. An additional 133 students were served in the tuition-supported pre-K program, for a total enrollment of 5,658 students.[1] Pre-K students were served in 69 of the 80 AISD elementary schools and in the Lucy Read Prekindergarten Demonstration School. Table 1 provides characteristics of pre-K students in the tuition program, and Table 2 provides characteristics of students in the mandated program. For more information about the tuition-supported program, see Brunner (2012).

Table 1. Tuition-Supported Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Students' Characteristics, 2011–2012

		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	54	41
	Male	79	59
Ethnicity	Asian	<10	<5
	Black/African American	<10	<5
	Hispanic/Latino	39	29
	White	78	59
	Two or more races	<10	<5
Total number of tuition students		135	

Source. AISD Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) records, 2011–2012
Note. Tuition student status was based on ineligibility status for average daily attendance (ADA) reimbursement and attendance for more than 7 days.

Students from low-income households (i.e., economically disadvantaged) were the majority (94%) of those served by the mandated pre-K program, followed by ELLs (58%).[2] Of ELLs who qualified, 94% (*n* = 2,978) were also from low-income families (i.e., eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch). Ninety-seven percent (*n* = 2,821) of Spanish-speaking ELLs, who represented 53% of all mandated pre-K

[1] A total of 5,661 students enrolled in pre-K; however, three students did not attend or were ineligible.
[2] Reference categories are not mutually exclusive (i.e., students could qualify based on more than one factor).

students, also qualified through family income status. One percent of students qualified as military dependents, as homeless, or through current or prior residency in foster care.

Table 2. Mandated Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Students' Characteristics, 2011–2012

		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	2,718	49
	Male	2,807	51
Ethnicity	Asian	213	4
	Black/African American	533	10
	Hispanic/Latino	4,355	79
	White	315	6
	Two or more races	98	2
	Other ethnicities	11	<1
Eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch		5,184	94
Homeless		74	1
Received special education services		489	9
	Speech impairment	438	8
Primary home language	English	2,257	41
	Non-English and non-ELL*	83	2
	Spanish ELL	2,918	53
	Vietnamese ELL	38	1
	Korean ELL	23	<1
	Arabic ELL	22	<1
	Mandarin ELL	22	<1
	Telugu ELL	22	<1
	Other ELL	140	3
Total ELL		3,185	58
ELL and low-income	Spanish-speaker	2,821	51
	Other language	157	3
Total number of mandatory pre-K students		5,525	

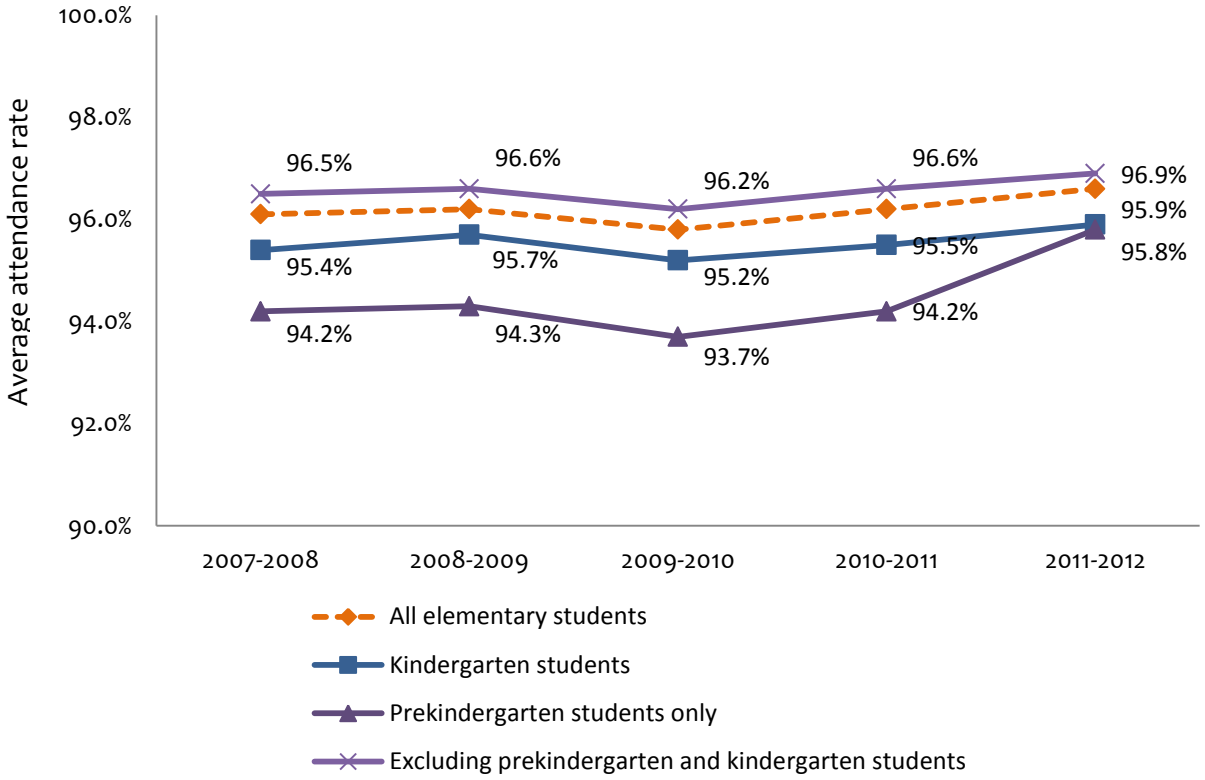
Source. AISD Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) records, 2011–2012

Note. Other ethnicities include American Indian/Alaskan native and native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander.

***** ELL is English language learner.

Attendance. Attendance rates for all elementary students were higher in 2011–2012 than in 2010–2011. The district-wide average daily attendance rate for mandated pre-K students in 2011–2012 was 95.8%, an increase from the previous year (Figure 1). Although attendance rates for pre-K previously were lower than rates for kindergarten, for the first time in the past 5 years, the pre-K attendance rate approximated the kindergarten attendance rate (even as the kindergarten rate increased). Kindergarten and pre-K had a lower attendance rate than did the other elementary grade levels. Tuition-supported pre-K students had a higher attendance rate than did mandated pre-K students (i.e., 96.2%).

Figure 1. Elementary Students' Average District-wide Attendance Rates, 2007–2008 to 2011–2012
Source. AISD Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) records, 2007–2011



Note. The vertical axis of the bar chart has been truncated to represent 90% to 100% to better display the difference in attendance rates among students. Only grades prekindergarten through 5th grade were included. Attendance is calculated by grade level using the following formula: (Total eligible days present)/(Total days absent + Total eligible days present). All schools are represented.

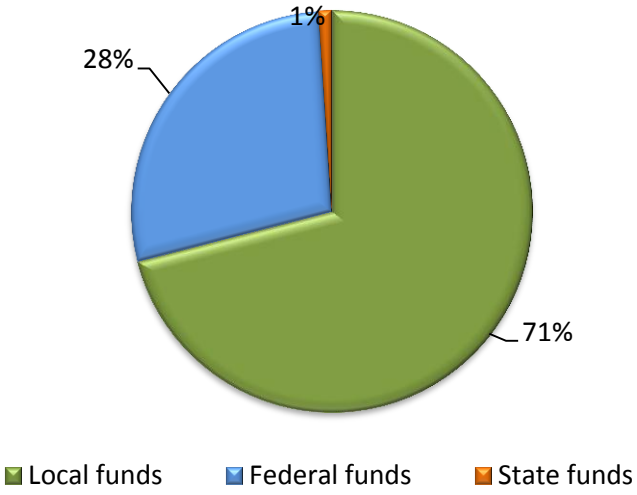
Fiscal consideration. AISD offered a full-day pre-K program, supported through the use of local and federal funds, totaling $16.4 million (as of August 14, 2012).[3] According to state mandate, local funds only are required by the state to support a half-day pre-K program. The 2011–2012 funding sources included the local funds ($11.7 million), federal funds (Education Jobs Fund [$4.4 million] and Title I A [$26K]), and state funds ($232K; Figure 2).

Ninety-five percent of the nearly $16.4 million was used to pay teachers' and professionals' personnel salaries and benefits for student instruction. The remainder of the funds went toward school leadership (3%); curriculum and instructional staff development opportunities (1%); plant

[3] DRE staff included all non-duplicating amounts for program code "32–pre-K," sub-object code "90–pre-K," sub-object code "92–tuition pre-K," and organization code "814–early childhood" to locate all expenditures. The first year to use program code "32" was 2011-2012. It is possible some expenditures were not included because they did not have one of the above-mentioned codes. Expenditures for program code 32 totaled $15,669,433 (as of August 14, 2012). Expenditures for sub-object codes 90 and 92 totaled $15,207,484 (as of August 14, 2012).

maintenance and operations (i.e., Lucy Read, 1%); and community services (< 1%). The overall cost per student for the 2011–2012 pre-K program was $2,891.[4] In the district, the Department of Early Childhood was expanded to include kindergarten programs in 2011–2012 (see footnote 3).

Figure 2. Prekindergarten Funding Sources, 2011–2012



Source. AISD fiscal records as of August 14, 2012
Note. Federal funds included Education Jobs Fund and Title I. State funds included the Texas Workforce Commission Apprenticeship program, Texas School Ready, and textbook funds.

Comparison of cost-per-student allocation statewide and federally. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER; Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2011) produces a publication about state and federal spending on early childhood programs each year. According to this report, for 2010–2011, the average overall cost per pre-K student enrolled in the state of Texas was $3,761 (for both half-day and full-day pre-K programs using state funds only). AISD offered a full-day pre-K program to 5,614 pre-K students, supported through the use of local, state, and federal funds last year in the amount over $18.2 million, at an overall cost per student of $3,234 (Brunner, 2011). This was a $94 per-student decrease from the 2009–2010 year. Based on AISD's Fall 2010 enrollment, this was an estimated cost savings of $2.8 million (i.e., $527 per student). The total spending per student in Texas for Head Start averaged $8,236 in 2010–2011, and nationally the average spending per student enrolled for pre-K programs from all reported sources was $4,151.

Conclusion. Overall, the AISD pre-K program provides cost-effective full-day instruction for disadvantaged 4-year-old students. More than half (54%) of AISD pre-K students qualified for the pre-K program according to both language and income (i.e., representing a double barrier for the students' early education to overcome). AISD should continue to support funding for a full-day program to ensure that students continue to enter kindergarten ready to learn on grade level.

[4] DRE staff used the enrollment for both the mandated and tuition-supported pre-K program (i.e., 5,660 students).

References

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Appendix

Table A-1. Summary of Prekindergarten (Pre-K) Programs, by Campus, 2011–2012

Campus	Students	Teachers	Ratio	Title I	Campus	Students	Teachers	Ratio	Title I
Allan	60	4	1:15	X	Maplewood	34	2	1:17	
Allison	86	5	1:17	X	Mathews	28	2	1:14	
Andrews	121	6	1:20	X	Menchaca	73	4	1:18	
Baldwin	33	2	1:17		Metz	62	4	1:16	X
Barrington	162	7	1:23	X	Mills	46	2	1:23	
Becker	57	3	1:19	X	Norman	33	1	1:33	X
Blackshear	26	3	1:9	X	Oak Hill	39	2	1:20	
Blanton	103	6	1:17	X	Oak Springs	42	3	1:14	X
Blazier	94	5	1:19	X	Odom	83	5	1:17	X
Boone	34	2	1:17		Ortega	38	3	1:13	X
Brentwood	27	2	1:14		Overton	104	6	1:17	X
Brooke	52	3	1:17	X	Palm	54	4	1:14	X
Brown	77	5	1:15	X	Patton	48	3	1:16	
Campbell	47	3	1:16	X	Pecan Springs	85	5	1:1	X
Casey	68	4	1:17	X	Perez	130	7	1:19	X
Casis	20	1	1:20		Pickle	109	6	1:18	X
Cowan	44	3	1:15		Pillow	80	4	1:20	
Cunningham	58	3	1:19		Pleasant Hill	67	4	1:17	X
Davis	44	3	1:15		Read	458	24	1:19	
Dawson	45	3	1:15	X	Reilly	44	3	1:15	X
Doss	23	2	1:12		Ridgetop	40	2	1:16	X
Galindo	91	5	1:18	X	Rodriguez	113	7	1:16	X
Govalle	87	4	1:17	X	Sanchez	85	5	1:17	X
Graham	131	5	1:22	X	Sims	62	3	1:21	X
Gullett	18	1	1:18		St Elmo	29	2	1:15	X
Harris	106	5	1:21	X	Summitt	52	3	1:17	
Hart	149	8	1:19	X	Sunset Valley	63	4	1:16	X
Hill	22	2	1:11		Travis Heights	76	4	1:19	X
Houston	138	8	1:17	X	Walnut Creek	159	8	1:20	X
Jordan	108	5	1:22	X	Widen	101	6	1:17	X
Joslin	27	1	1:27	X	Williams	66	4	1:17	X
Kiker	20	2	1:10		Winn	56	4	1:14	X
Kocurek	75	4	1:19	X	Wooten	97	4	1:24	X
Langford	117	6	1:20	X	Zavala	58	3	1:19	X
Linder	123	7	1:18	X	Zilker	32	2	1:16	

Source. AISD student and enrollment records, Fall 2011; human resource records, Spring 2012
Note. Student enrollment and teacher data were not based on the same day. Student mobility and teacher assignment would affect actual ratio. *Ratio* is the staff-to-student ratio and only includes pre-K teachers. Elementary schools without a pre-K program were Baranoff, Barton Hills, Bryker Woods, Clayton, Cook, Highland Park, Lee, McBee, Pease, and Woodridge.