

Evaluation of the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA): Interim Report #2



Executive Summary

December 2010

Submitted to:
Texas Education Agency



Submitted by:
ICF International
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Evaluation of the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA): Interim Report #2

Executive Summary

December 2010

Submitted to:
Texas Education Agency



Prepared by:
ICF International
9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

CREDITS

ICF International

ICF International partners with government and commercial clients to deliver consulting services and technology solutions in the social programs, health, energy, climate change, environment, transportation, defense, and emergency management markets.

The firm combines passion for its work with industry expertise and innovative analytics to produce compelling results throughout the entire program life cycle, from analysis and design through implementation and improvement.

For additional information about ICF, please contact:

ICF International

9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031-1207 USA

Phone: 1.703.934.3603 or 1.800.532.4783

Fax: 1.703.934.3740

email: info@icfi.com

Authors

Rosemarie O’Conner, PhD
Thomas J. Horwood

Project Contributors

Frances Burden, PhD
Brian Cronin, PhD
Candace Cronin, PhD
Julie Gdula
Amy Mack, PsyD
Katerina Passa, PhD
Tracy Roberts
Jacqueline Schmidt
Jing Sun
Jocelyn Vas
Erin Williamson
Jessica Zumdahl

Prepared for

Texas Education Agency
1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494
Phone: 512-463-9734

Research Funded by
Texas Education Agency

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Copyright © The materials are copyrighted © and trademarked ™ as the property of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and may not be reproduced without the express written permission of TEA, except under the following conditions:

- 1) Texas public school districts, charter schools, and Education Service Centers may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for the districts' and schools' educational use without obtaining permission from TEA.
- 2) Residents of the state of Texas may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for individual personal use only without obtaining written permission of TEA.
- 3) Any portion reproduced must be reproduced in its entirety and remain unedited, unaltered and unchanged in any way.
- 4) No monetary charge can be made for the reproduced materials or any document containing them; however, a reasonable charge to cover only the cost of reproduction and distribution may be charged.

Private entities or persons located in Texas that are **not** Texas public school districts, Texas Education Service Centers, or Texas charter schools or any entity, whether public or private, educational or non-educational, located **outside the state of Texas** *MUST* obtain written approval from TEA and will be required to enter into a license agreement that may involve the payment of a licensing fee or a royalty.

For information contact: Office of Copyrights, Trademarks, License Agreements, and Royalties, Texas Education Agency, 1701 N. Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701-1494; phone 512-463-9270 or 512-936-6060; email: copyrights@tea.state.tx.us.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ES-1
About TALA.....	ES-1
Approach to the TALA Evaluation.....	ES-2
Evaluation Findings	ES-3
Conclusions and Next Steps for TALA.....	ES-12

List of Tables

Table 1: TAB Findings and Recommendations based on Review of Grade 6 and Grades 7-8 TALA Materials ES-4

Table 2: Findings from Observations of TALA Academies by Grade 6 and Grades 7-8 ES-5

Table 3: Trainer and Teacher Participant Perceptions of TALA Training ES-6

List of Figures

Figure 1. TALA Campus Comparison Groups ES-10

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on evaluation findings related to Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) program activity through summer 2009. An initial interim report focused on training activities during summer 2008 related to grade 6 teachers was published in May of 2009 and is referenced throughout the report.¹ This second interim report focuses on findings of training activities during summer 2009 related to grade 7 and grade 8 teachers and to grade 6 teachers' implementation of TALA during the 2008-09 school year.

About TALA

Texas House Bill 2237 was passed in 2007 in order to improve high school success and increase college readiness in Texas public schools, and it provided specific direction and funding for TALA. TALA was created to improve literacy rates among middle school students. In order to achieve this goal, TALA focuses on improving teaching by providing Grades 6-8 English language arts (ELA)/reading and content area teachers with research-based strategies for improving their students' academic literacy.

The TALA Model

The goal of TALA is to provide professional development for ELA/reading and content area teachers in the use of scientifically-based literacy practices to improve academic literacy. TALA is intended to help prepare middle school teachers to design appropriate instruction for all students, including those who are struggling with reading due to limited English proficiency (LEP), learning disabilities, dyslexia, and other risk factors for reading difficulties.

TALA instructional routines emphasize implementation of a three-tier reading model consistent with a response to intervention (RTI) model. RTI emphasizes ongoing data collection and immediate intervention for students who demonstrate a need in one or more reading skills. TALA is tailored for the unique structure of middle schools and is framed within a schoolwide approach to addressing the needs of struggling adolescent readers.

The Format of TALA

As designed to date, TALA consists of two separate academies: ELA academy and content area academy. The ELA academy is designed for reading and English language arts teachers. The content area academy targets math, science, and social studies teachers. Both academies provide professional development in scientifically-based, general literacy instructional strategies. ELA academies consisted of three days of face-to-face training, followed by a one-day online practicum follow-up. The content area academies consisted of a day and a half of face-to-face training, followed by a half-day online practicum. During TALA, trainers provided examples of the strategies and their applications, both in hard copy and video formats, with appropriate subject area materials in the middle school classroom.

¹ Throughout the present report, all references to the evaluation report refer to the following citation: Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA): Interim Report #1, http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/ProfessionalDevelopment/TALA_Interim_0509.pdf.

TALA content was organized into seven units with individual modules that last between 30 and 75 minutes. Units 1-3 (Tier I strategies for all students) were covered in both ELA and content area academies, while units 4-7 (Tiers II and III strategies for students with reading difficulties) were only covered in the ELA academies. TALA training was first provided to grade 6 teachers during summer 2008, while training for grade 7 and grade 8 teachers first occurred in summer 2009. While the content for the grade 6 academies and the grade 7 and grade 8 academies was identical, grade-specific videos used in the training were different.

Implementation of TALA

Regional education service center (ESC) leaders were in charge of operations for the implementation of TALA statewide. The ESC leaders scheduled TALA ELA and content area academies in their respective regions, established locations, set dates and times, and worked with their information technology staffs to set up the registration information in their catalogs and develop a registration database to track participants.

In 2008 and 2009, TALA utilized a training of trainers (TOT) model in order to prepare trainers for the implementation of TALA statewide. Prior to the summer 2008 grade 6 academies, the State TOT was held in March 2008, where master trainers trained state trainers. Three Regional TOTs were then conducted in May 2008 in which state trainers trained regional trainers. Finally, regional trainers conducted TALA grade 6 teacher academies throughout the 20 ESCs with a maximum of 50 participants in each. The TOT model was repeated in spring 2009 followed by TALA grade 7 and grade 8 teacher academies in summer 2009. Teachers who teach at campuses that were rated Academically Unacceptable (AU) in reading were required to attend TALA. Grade 6 teachers attended these trainings in summer 2008, while grade 7 and grade 8 teachers attended trainings in summer 2009.

Approach to the TALA Evaluation

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) contracted with ICF International (ICF) to conduct a statewide evaluation of TALA. The comprehensive evaluation approach was designed to:

- Evaluate the quality of the TALA training, including the materials developed for use in training, the training of trainers, and the training of classroom teachers;
- Evaluate the quality and level of ongoing implementation of the TALA training in the classroom;
- Evaluate the effects of the TALA teacher training on student outcomes; and
- Conduct an analysis of financial data to assess the cost-effectiveness of TALA.

Specific research questions were developed to address each of the four overall evaluation objectives. These research questions guided the selection of data sources, the development of instruments to collect new data, and the analysis of the data.

Evaluating Quality of TALA Training

Several data sources were used to evaluate the quality of the TALA training, including TALA training materials, TALA training observations, state trainer interviews, the 2008 regional trainer survey, and the 2009 TALA trainer survey. An expert review technical advisory board (TAB,

consisting of five nationally recognized experts in literacy, professional development, and special education) reviewed the TALA content and materials in 2008 and 2009. Members of the ICF evaluation team conducted observations of TALA trainings at all three levels (State TOT, Regional TOT, and classroom teacher academies) in 2008 (and to a lesser extent in 2009), conducted state trainer telephone interviews in 2008, and administered the regional trainer and TALA trainer web-based surveys in 2008. Instruments developed in order to collect data from these sources included an expert review protocol, the TALA training observation protocol and semi-structured field note template, the state trainer telephone interview protocol, and the regional trainer survey. The regional trainer survey was modified to become the 2009 TALA trainer survey and included items for both state and regional trainers.

Evaluating TALA Implementation, Impact on Student Outcomes and Cost Effectiveness

Existing data were obtained from TALA archival planning materials (e.g., steering committee meeting minutes, program rules), TEA Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS), TEA Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), ESC-provided teacher stipend data, and the TALA online follow-up data. New data were collected through spring 2009 classroom observations of participating grade 6 teachers, online surveys of participating teachers and campus administrators, and interviews with the TALA developer and TEA program staff. Instruments developed in order to collect data from these sources included a TALA-specific observation protocol, the TALA developer and program staff telephone interview protocol, and the participating teacher and campus administrator surveys. An ESC TALA expenditure reporting form was developed to collect expenditures broken out by categories (e.g., number of academies conducted, budgets per academy). Trained graduate students conducted observations of TALA participating classrooms. Members of the ICF evaluation team conducted telephone interviews, and administered the participating teacher and campus administrator web-based survey. Additional data collection occurred during the 2009-10 school year and will be included in a final TALA evaluation report to be submitted in December 2010.

Evaluation Findings

The Quality of TALA Training

Grade 6 and Grades 7-8 TALA Training

Expert Review of Teacher Training Materials

The TAB reviewed both the Grade 6 training materials (see Interim Report #1) and the Grades 7-8 training materials (written and video). They also reviewed overall descriptions of the training (e.g., time allotted for presenting modules). Not surprisingly given the amount of overlap in materials provided to Grade 6 versus Grade 7 and 8 teachers, the TAB findings and recommendations over the two sets of materials were very similar (see Table 1). The TAB concluded that, overall, instructional routines included in both sets of materials were linked to state standards and that the practices used in the professional development component are strong. The TAB was concerned about the short duration of the TALA training and follow-up and recommended that systematic support mechanisms (including ongoing follow-up, administrator support, and a dedicated website) could assist in addressing the concerns associated with the implementation of TALA in schools.

Table 1: TAB Findings and Recommendations based on Review of Grade 6 and Grades 7-8 TALA Materials

	Grade 6 TALA Materials	Grades 7-8 TALA Materials
TAB findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overall quality of TALA content is high. ▪ Many of the instructional routines represent the best practices in literacy and are scientifically based. ▪ The instructional routines are linked to national and state standards. ▪ The practices used in the professional development component are strong (e.g., TALA trainers modeling strategies during training). ▪ The short duration of the TALA training was a concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The content is based on research-based best practices. ▪ The instructional routines are linked to state standards. ▪ The emphasis on importance/ necessity of routines for content area teachers is a benefit. ▪ TALA does not try to introduce too many strategies, and this makes it manageable for teachers. ▪ The practices used in the professional development component are strong (e.g., active learning). ▪ The reading intervention units may pose problems for middle school ELA teachers lacking background knowledge. ▪ Minimal amount of follow-up to initial training is provided.
TAB recommendations to improve TALA training and the implementation of TALA in schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide teachers with systematic support from reading coaches and school administrators. ▪ Provide teachers with on-going training to assist them with classroom implementation. ▪ Provide teachers with opportunities to see TALA strategies actually modeled in the classroom after the training. ▪ Integrate actual teacher texts into the training as this may allow the teacher to see how TALA instructional routines will work in their classrooms.* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide teachers with additional vocabulary and comprehension instructional routines. ▪ Provide teachers with ongoing follow-up activities. ▪ Include suggestions for setting up TALA teacher study groups or grade level team activities at the district or campus level. ▪ Suggest a school administrator trained in the TALA routines evaluate the teacher during the year. ▪ Develop a dedicated TALA website to serve as a hub to post, share, and critique lessons.

* Teachers were asked to bring their Teacher’s Editions of textbooks to the TALA training, and activities were structured so that teacher participants could practice TALA strategies using their own materials.

Observations of TALA Training

TALA Grade 6 Regional TOTs and TALA classroom teacher academies and TALA Grades 7-8 classroom teacher academies were highly rated overall by observers (see Table 2). While some Grades 7-8 TALA trainers were observed providing personal examples and asking interactive questions, observers expressed the concern that some were reading directly from notes, perhaps indicating the trainer was not yet personally comfortable with the materials.

Table 2: Findings from Observations of TALA Academies by Grade 6 and Grades 7-8

Observations of TALA Grade 6 Regional TOTs and TALA Grade 6 Classroom Teacher Academies	Observations of TALA Grades 7-8 Classroom Teacher Academies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trainings were reflective of best practices for professional development. ▪ Trainers effectively implemented the components of the TALA training. ▪ The culture of the training sessions facilitated the engagement of participants. ▪ Trainers followed the activities and content of the TALA training materials. ▪ A large amount of information was covered during the TALA trainings in a short amount of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The training was well implemented. ▪ Trainers were effective in their use of TALA videos and handouts, managing the training pace, and using modeling. ▪ Trainers were given low ratings on the use of questioning strategies, connecting TALA to TEKS, and connecting TALA to English Language Learners. ▪ Training participants were actively involved in the TALA training and worked collaboratively together. ▪ The TALA trainers attempted to reach their audiences through personal examples and interactive questions. ▪ The majority of the delivery method involved trainers reading directly from their notes.

Trainer and Participant Perceptions of TALA Training

Both state and regional trainers of the Grade 6 TALA training and Grades 7-8 TALA training had positive perceptions of the training (see Table 3). Trainers reported that the training they attended adequately prepared them for the training they conducted. This favorable perception of TALA training was echoed by Grade 6 ELA and content area classroom teachers. The majority of Grade 6 classroom teachers (86%) who participated in TALA indicated that the TALA trainings were appropriate for teachers of their subjects. Over 75% of teacher responded that the TALA training would help to improve teaching in their respective subjects.

Table 3: Trainer and Teacher Participant Perceptions of TALA Training

	Grade 6 TALA Training	Grades 7-8 TALA Training
State and Regional Trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trainer roles and expectations were clearly stated and the goals of the trainings were clearly articulated. ▪ Content area state trainers noted gaps in the math, science, and social studies aspects of content. ▪ ELA and content area state trainers noted that the overall quality of the trainings was very good. ▪ State and regional trainers reported that more time was needed to discuss potential problems that would arise during the trainings. ▪ Regional and state trainers reported that they felt adequately prepared for the training they conducted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The culture and quality of the training were rated positively by most trainers. ▪ The training content and materials were reported as what the trainers liked best. ▪ The most frequently reported area for improvement pertained to the scripted nature of the TALA training (e.g., reading the slides verbatim). ▪ The majority of trainers (94%) felt prepared for their roles as a TALA trainer. ▪ Most of the trainers (89%) reported that they would attend a similar training in the future, and over 50% of the trainers were returning trainers from 2008.
ELA Classroom Teacher Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ELA teachers reported that the quality of the TALA trainings (73%), the effectiveness of the presenters (73%), and the quality of the workshop content (75%) were above average or excellent. ▪ Over 80% of ELA teachers reported that they were fairly well or very well prepared to use the TALA instructional routines, strategies, and assessment (Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment - TMSFA). ▪ Approximately 63% of ELA felt prepared to deal with special student populations (e.g., LEP, special education, economically disadvantaged). ▪ Approximately 90% of ELA teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the TALA ELA trainings were appropriate for teachers of ELA and reading. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not yet available – to be reported in final evaluation report
Content Area Classroom Teacher Participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content area teachers reported that the quality of the TALA trainings (63%), the effectiveness of the presenters (61%), and the quality of the workshop content (63%) were above average or excellent. ▪ Approximately 53% of content area teachers felt prepared to deal with special student populations (e.g., LEP, special education, economically disadvantaged). ▪ Most content area teachers (80%) agreed or strongly agreed that the TALA content area trainings were appropriate for content area teachers and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would recommend the training to social studies or science teachers (83%). ▪ Would recommend the training for math teachers (77%). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not yet available – to be reported in final evaluation report

Administrator Overview Training

Expert Review of Administrator Overview Training

Overall, the TAB viewed the administrator overview training as a step in the right direction. Getting administrator “buy-in” was viewed as critical to TALA’s success. The TAB liked the handouts that illustrated how to organize instruction (e.g., sample schedules). They recommended that the training be delivered in person with an ongoing follow-up that could be web-based.

The TAB had the following recommendations that they believe would secure campus administrator support:

- Administrators should be required to attend the administrator training.
- Administrators should go through the same training that the teachers attended.
- Handouts need to be explicitly mentioned in the training.
- Administrators should be provided with detailed training on using the *Walkthrough Guide*.²
- The handouts to assist in the implementation of a schoolwide intervention (e.g., *Walkthrough Guides*, classroom observation forms, *Teacher Self-Assessment*) should be simplified and clarified for use in Texas.
- In the future, administrator training should be conducted by administrators who have successfully implemented the program at their schools/campuses.

Administrator Perceptions of TALA Training

Administrators were asked to rate the overall quality of the training they received. Over half of the administrators (62%) rated the quality of the training as “excellent” or “above average,” while a small percentage (6%) rated the training they received as “below average” or “poor.” The majority of the administrators perceived the training structure (87%), content (92%), and materials (92%) as effective or very effective, and 72% believed that the TALA training was effective or highly effective in preparing them to support teachers.

Classroom Implementation of TALA

Based on responses to the TALA teacher participant survey, Grade 6 classroom observations, and TALA online follow-up data, the majority of Grade 6 ELA and content area teachers who participated in TALA reported that they are implementing TALA routines into their instruction to at least some degree.

Implementation of TALA in Grade 6 ELA Classrooms

Teachers who attended TALA Grade 6 ELA academies are implementing the TALA content and strategies in their classrooms in many ways, including:

² The *Walkthrough Guide* allows administrators to evaluate the level of TALA implementation in the teachers’ classrooms. The *Walkthrough Guide* consists of observable elements of TALA instructional routines. A total score is calculated and interpreted as high, partial, or low implementation of TALA instructional routines.

- About 9 out of 10 ELA teachers surveyed (n= 997) are incorporating TALA into their instruction at least to some degree.
- ELA teachers reported more frequent classroom implementation of identifying main ideas in text, defining words, and building background knowledge than other TALA Tier I instructional routines.
- ELA teachers indicated that they are implementing Tiers II and III instructional routines:
 - ♦ To help struggling readers,
 - ♦ To reinvigorate their teaching using new methods, and
 - ♦ To help students develop skills that will help them become better readers across all subjects.
- The TMSFA is not implemented as widely as the TALA instructional routines by the ELA teachers, with 35% of ELA teachers reporting they occasionally or frequently administer and/or interpret the TMSFA, and 33% reporting that they have never administered or interpreted results from the TMSFA.
- Of the teachers who implemented the TMSFA, 32% indicated that the areas of need that were identified for the majority of their students were decoding, fluency, and comprehension; 50% said the areas of need were fluency and comprehension only; and 18% said the area of need was comprehension only.
- A majority of observed ELA teachers (71%) implemented general TALA strategies (e.g., fostering student engagement, providing explicit instruction, providing feedback to students).
- A majority of ELA teachers who were observed implemented vocabulary instructional routines (81%) and comprehension instructional routines (66%).
- One-quarter of the ELA teachers who were observed implemented word study routines (25%), while only a few implemented monitoring comprehension routines (12%), and fluency routines (5%).

Implementation of TALA in Content Area Classrooms

Content area teachers (science, social studies, mathematics) who attended TALA Grade 6 content area academies also are implementing the TALA content and strategies in their classrooms in many ways, including:

- About 9 out of 10 content area teachers surveyed (n=832) are incorporating TALA into their instruction at least to some degree.
- A majority of observed content area teachers implemented general TALA strategies (e.g., fostering student engagement, providing explicit instruction, providing feedback to students).
- A majority of content area teachers who were observed implemented vocabulary instructional routines (76%).
- Less than half of the content area teachers who were observed implemented comprehension instructional routines (35%), and word study routines (20%).
- Content area teachers reported more frequent classroom implementation of defining words, building background knowledge, and generating examples and nonexamples.

- Content area teachers also reported that they frequently adapt instruction to structure learning opportunities for all students, foster student engagement, and group or pair students.

Campus Support of TALA Implementation

- The majority of ELA and content area teachers (80%) reported that policies and practices to support TALA schoolwide were at least in development at their campuses. These supports included:
 - ◆ Support from administrators
 - ◆ Assessment of students in reading
 - ◆ Creation of literacy intervention plans
 - ◆ Improvement of school climate
 - ◆ Strengthening of core instructional programs
 - ◆ Provision of teacher professional development

At least 85% of administrators responded that these same supports were at least in development at their campuses.

Impact of TALA on Grade 6 Student Achievement

The evaluation team investigated the effects of TALA on student achievement, in particular, reading achievement, math achievement, and achievement by students identified as being at-risk. In addition the relationship between student achievement and a range of teacher characteristics was explored.

In order to best understand the impact of TALA on student achievement, campuses were first classified on level of implementing TALA (high, medium or low) based on the proportion of Grade 6 teachers who participated in TALA, the percentage of Grade 6 teachers who completed the online follow-up, teacher self-reported implementation of the TALA instructional routines/strategies in the TALA teacher participant survey, and on level of campus support as reported in the administrator survey and TALA teacher participant survey. The high implementing campuses were then matched to campuses where teachers had not participated in TALA in order to make comparisons related to student achievement. A description of the matching process and outcomes of the match are described in Appendix L. This analysis assumes that all students on the campus had opportunity to have experienced teaching that had been impacted by TALA implementation.

In addition to comparisons made between high implementing TALA campuses and matched non-TALA campuses, the evaluation team examined differences among participating TALA campuses (high, medium, and low implementers). TALA campuses were further divided based on prior student reading performance (2007-08 school year) according to the average percentage of students who met the TAKS standard in reading for the campuses (above the mean vs. at or below the mean). The TALA campuses were compared using the categories described in Figure 1.

Figure 1. TALA Campus Comparison Groups

		Prior Reading Performance	
		Low: At or Below the Mean	High: Above the Mean
TALA Implementation	High	High Implementing/Low Reading Performance	High Implementing/High Reading Performance
	Medium	Medium Implementing/Low Reading Performance	Medium Implementing/High Reading Performance
	Low	Low Implementing/Low Reading Performance	Low Implementing/High Reading Performance

Reading and Math Achievement

High Implementing TALA Participating Campuses vs. Non-TALA Participating Campuses

Results from the trend analyses of TAKS achievement of Grade 6 students (from 2005-06 to 2008-09) at high implementing TALA participating campuses to students at non-TALA participating campuses were as follows:

- There were no significant differences in Grade 6 reading achievement or math achievement between TALA and non-TALA campuses.
- Both TALA campuses and non-TALA campuses experienced a significant increase in the percentage of students meeting the standard in reading achievement and math achievement from 2006-07 to 2007-08 (the two years prior to TALA training). This increase was followed by a decline in both groups in the percentage of students meeting standards in 2008-09.

Comparisons of High, Medium, and Low Implementing TALA Participating Campuses

Changes in Grade 6 TAKS reading scores and Grade 6 TAKS math scores were compared across time for high, medium, and low implementing campuses. TALA campuses were then divided according to the average percentage of students who met the standard in reading for the implementing campuses in 2007-08 (*above the mean* and *at or below the mean*).³ Results from these trend analyses included:

- For the between year comparisons by level of campus implementation, when comparing similarly classified campuses to themselves over time, there were significant differences in reading and math achievement:
 - ♦ For all campuses (low, medium, and high) classified as above the mean, the percentage of students meeting the standard in TAKS reading significantly increased from 2005-06 to 2007-08 and from 2006-07 to 2007-08. All campuses experienced a significant

³ The mean percentage of students who met the standard on the reading TAKS in 2007-08 was 93.5.

decrease in the percentage of students meeting the standard in TAKS reading from 2007-08 to 2008-09.

- ◆ For low implementing campuses that had low prior reading performance (classified as at or below the mean), the percentage of students meeting the standard in TAKS reading significantly increased from 2005-06 to 2007-08 and from 2006-07 to 2007-08. This was followed by a significant decrease in the percentage of students meeting the standard from 2007-08 to 2008-09. There were no significant differences across time for medium or high implementing campuses classified as at or below the mean.
- ◆ For all campuses (low, medium, and high) classified as above the mean, the percentage of students meeting the standard in TAKS math significantly increased from 2005-06 to 2007-08 and from 2006-07 to 2007-08. All campuses experienced a significant decrease in the percentage of students meeting the standard from 2007-08 to 2008-09.
- ◆ For low implementing campuses classified as at or below the mean, the percentage of students meeting the standard in TAKS math significantly increased from 2005-06 to 2007-08 and from 2006-07 to 2007-08. Medium and high implementing campuses also experienced a significant increase from 2006-07 to 2007-08. Although all three groups experienced a decrease in the percentage of students who met the math TAKS standard from 2007-08 to 2008-09, only the low implementing campuses experienced a significant decrease.
- For the within year comparisons among campuses, when comparing low, medium, and high implementing campuses to each other at any one time point, there were no significant differences in reading and math achievement. During the 2005-06 school year, low, medium, and high implementing campuses performed similarly with respect to reading and math achievement. This was also true in the 2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09 school years.

At-Risk Student Achievement

Using student-level data comparing the same students from one year to the next, the change in percentage of Grade 6 students from TALA campuses (high, medium, and low implementing) who met the TAKS standards in reading and math (first administration) was examined for at-risk student groups. The at-risk groups included special education students, LEP students, and economically disadvantaged students. The team analyzed student level TAKS data to compare the percentage of students who met the TAKS standards in 2007-08 (while in grade 5) and the percentage of the same group of students who met the TAKS standards in 2008-09 (while in grade 6). The results included:

- The percentage of special education students who met the standard in reading significantly increased from 2007-08 (grade 5) to 2008-09 (grade 6). The percentage of special education students who met the standard in reading increased by 15 percentage points, whereas the increase for non-special education students at TALA campuses was 7 percentage points.
- The percentage of special education students who met the standard in math significantly increased from 2007-08 (grade 5) to 2008-09 (grade 6). The percentage of special education students who met the standard in math increased by 2 percentage points, whereas the percentage of non-special education students at TALA campuses who met the standard decreased by 5 percentage points.

- The percentage of LEP students who met the standard in reading significantly increased from 2007-08 (grade 5) to 2008-09 (grade 6). The percentage of LEP students who met the standard in reading increased by 13 percentage points, whereas the increase for non-LEP students at TALA campuses was 8 percentage points.
- The percentage of economically disadvantaged students who met the standard in reading significantly increased from 2007-08 (grade 5) to 2008-09 (grade 6). The percentage of economically disadvantaged students who met the standard in reading increased by 9 percentage points, whereas the increase for non-economically disadvantaged students at TALA campuses was 6 percentage points.

Analysis of TALA Funding Allocations and Expenditures

The evaluation team examined how funds were used to both develop TALA content and disseminate TALA for Grade 6. Additional limited analyses examined planned expenditures for TALA Grades 7-8. The analyses revealed the following:

ELA TALA Academies for Grade 6

- For the ELA component of TALA, ESCs drew down an average of 59% of the funding allocated for the dissemination of TALA Grade 6 ELA area academies.
- Generally, when ESCs drew down smaller percentages of their total allotted expenditures, it was due to fewer teachers attending the TALA trainings.
- Only one ESC spent more than the funds originally allocated for the ELA component of TALA, while the rest of the ESCs spent 45% to 82% of their allocated budgets.
- Overall, ESCs spent an average of \$799 per teacher and \$18,093 per academy to conduct the TALA Grade 6 ELA academies.

Content TALA Academies for Grade 6

- For the content component of TALA, ESCs spent an average of 48% of their allocated funding for the content area academies.
- The content area academies spent 27% to 84% of their allocated budgets.
- Similar to ELA academies, ESCs reported that the content academies tended to spend more of their budgets when they trained more teachers.
- Overall, it cost an average of \$761 per teacher and \$11,192 per academy to conduct the TALA Grade 6 content area academies.

Conclusions and Next Steps for TALA

The overall findings of the TALA evaluation provide evidence that the TALA content is representative of best practices for literacy instruction, explicitly aligned to English language arts (ELA)/reading national and state standards, and illustrative of best practices for professional development. The TALA training prepared trainers for their roles as trainers and Grade 6 classroom teachers for implementation of the TALA routines and strategies in their classrooms. Grade 6 ELA and content area teachers who participated in TALA are implementing TALA routines into their instruction. Classroom teachers and campus administrators report campus

support for the TALA program, consistent with the school-wide approach of TALA. Preliminary findings indicate that TALA participation is positively affecting TAKS scores in reading, particularly for special education students, LEP students, and economically disadvantaged students. Special education students are also experiencing positive increases in TAKS scores in math.

For the final report, the evaluation team plans to use many of the same data gathering techniques, including surveys of the different TALA stakeholders and classroom observations of TALA implementation. However, the data collection will include intensive case studies of TALA participating campuses, allowing the evaluation team to examine TALA implementation in AU campuses and campuses with positive shifts in TAKS scores and to assess the level of campus support. Data analyses will include comparisons of TAKS scores of students of TALA participating teachers and students of non-participating teachers. Data analyses will also include the creation of a level of campus participation and campus level changes over time on reading, math, science, and social studies TAKS scores. Changes in at-risk student population TAKS scores will also be compared across time. Further, in terms of cost effectiveness, the evaluation team plans to measure the cost of the program per extra student that meets the standard on the TAKS as a result of their teacher's participation in the program. In addition, the costs and benefits of program continuation will be estimated, providing information about the sustainability of the program. The evaluation team will also use sensitivity analyses to examine the impact that changes in assumptions and estimates would have on the evaluation of cost effectiveness of TALA.