

The Student Success Initiative: An Evaluation Report



Submitted to the 81st Texas Legislature in fulfillment of Rider 79 (80th session) by the
Office for Planning, Grants, and Evaluation

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**Prepared by
Office for Planning, Grants and Evaluation
Texas Education Agency**

January, 2009

Texas Education Agency

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The Division of Evaluation, Analysis, and Planning wishes to thank all agency staff who contributed to this report, and all school districts and open-enrollment charter schools for the timely and accurate submission of their required reports to the agency.

Citation. Texas Education Agency. (2009). The Student Success Initiative: An Evaluation Report. Austin, TX: Author.

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This report is available at TEA's website at http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/ReadingMathScience/SSI_ARI_AMI_Evaluation_2009.pdf.

Acknowledgements

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The Office of Planning, Grants and Evaluation wishes to thank the following TEA staff for their assistance providing feedback on drafts of this report: Lizzette Reynolds; Kelly Callaway; Jim Van Overschelde, Ph.D.; Kent Gummerman, Ph.D.; and Marianne Vaughan, Ph.D.

Final editing assistance was provided by Jerry Hagins under contract to TEA and by Virginia Beck.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
Grade Levels Served by ARI/AMI.....	6
ARI/AMI Funding	7
Use of ARI/AMI Funds: 2006–07 School Year	7
ARI/AMI Instructional Strategies.....	8
Student Outcomes.....	9
Conclusion.....	10

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Percentage of Students Identified by ARI/AMI Grantees as Struggling at Start of Year, 2003–04 to 2006–07 School Years.....	10
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accelerated Reading Instruction/Accelerated Math Instruction (ARI/AMI) grants are a major component of the Texas Student Success Initiative (SSI), which requires students to pass Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) in Grades 3, 5, and 8 to be promoted to the next grade. The purpose of the ARI/AMI initiatives is to provide districts with additional financial resources to provide immediate, targeted instruction to students who demonstrate difficulty in reading and/or math.

In the 2006–07 school year, the ARI/AMI initiative served students in Kindergarten (K) through Grade 7. Students in K through Grade 2 who are struggling in reading or math are identified through the administration of diagnostic assessment tools or through classroom performance. Students who are struggling in Grades 3–8 may be identified through the use of diagnostic assessment tools, by failing the first administration of the reading or math TAKS, or through other forms of assessment including classroom performance.¹

This report describes the ARI/AMI initiative for the 2006–07 school year, including the number of students served by the initiative and how ARI/AMI funds were used to achieve the initiative’s goals. The report concludes with an analysis of aggregated student achievement outcomes for students targeted by ARI/AMI funds.

During the 2006–07 school year, \$149 million in ARI/AMI funding was provided to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools (referred to hereafter as

¹ Identification of students who are struggling incorporates criteria for inclusion that are broader than those used for awarding grants. Funding for ARI/AMI grants is based solely on numbers of students failing TAKS in the prior school year (i.e., Grade 3 reading, Grade 5 reading and/or math).

grantees). Data were reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) by grantees through the statutorily required Consolidated Reading Initiative Report (CRIR).² On average, grantees identified 29% of students in Grades K–7 as struggling in reading and 25% as struggling in mathematics. The majority of these students (79% of students struggling in reading and 82% of students struggling in math) were provided ARI/AMI-funded services. By the end of the school year, grantees reported that more than two-thirds of the students served by ARI/AMI funds were on grade level.

Grade Levels Served by ARI/AMI

In the 1999–00 school year, SSI funding began for school districts offering ARI services for Kindergarten students. In each subsequent school year, another grade has been funded. By the 2007–08 school year, services provided by ARI funds had been expanded to include students in Grades K–8. Beginning in the 2003–04 school year, AMI services were funded for students in Grades K–4, and by the 2007–08 school year, AMI services had expanded to include students in Grades K–8.

During the 2006–07 school year:

- ARI funds served 634,680 students in Grades K–7.
- AMI funds served 565,255 students in Grades K–7.³
- ARI/AMI funds served approximately 80% of the Grade K–7 students identified as struggling in reading and/or math. The remaining 20% were provided accelerated instruction services not funded through ARI/AMI or moved out of the district.

² Texas Education Code (TEC) §28.006.

³ A student may be served by both the ARI and AMI programs, so there is likely some overlap between the two programs.

ARI/AMI Funding

The amount of ARI/AMI funding awarded to each grantee is based on the number of students who failed TAKS. In the 2006–07 school year, grantees were awarded \$1,548 for each Grade 3 student who failed the first administration of the 2006 TAKS reading and each Grade 5 student who failed the first administration of the 2006 TAKS math. These funds are then used by grantees to serve students across grade levels (not just students in Grades 3 and 5).

ARI/AMI funding increased from \$65.2 million in the 2000–01 school year to \$149.48 million in the 2006–07 school year. However, because the number of students served has grown from 75,340 to almost 1.2 million during the same period, the average funding per student served has decreased from \$320 to \$120. These numbers should be considered lower bound estimates, as they do not take into account that any particular student may have been served by both ARI and AMI. The upper bound estimates would be approximately twice as large (i.e., the decrease may have been as high as \$640 to \$240).

Use of ARI/AMI Funds: 2006–07 School Year

Analysis of how grantees reported spending ARI/AMI funds in the 2006–07 school year indicates that over 91% of all program funds were concentrated in two broad budget categories: payroll costs and supplies/materials. Specifically, grantees reported spending most of their funding (81%) on four budget items:

1. Supplemental curriculum (26%)
2. Teacher pay (25%)
3. Tutor pay (15%)
4. Other supplies/materials (15%)

ARI/AMI Instructional Strategies

Instructional Grouping Strategies

- The majority of grantees (85% of ARI grantees and 84% of AMI grantees) used teacher pay for small group instruction; the percentages were even higher for tutor pay (90% of both ARI and AMI grantees used tutor pay for small group instruction).
- More than two-thirds of grantees (72% of ARI grantees and 70% of AMI grantees) reported that funds spent on supplemental curriculum were used for small group instruction. Similarly (69% of ARI grantees and 67% of AMI grantees), funds for other supplies/materials were primarily used for small group instruction.
- Few ARI/AMI grantees (ranging from 5–8%) reported spending funds for teacher pay, tutor pay, supplemental curriculum and other supplies/materials on one-to-one instruction. Tutor pay was also used only rarely to support whole group instruction (3% of both ARI and AMI grantees).

Time of Instruction Strategies

- Grantees reported that instruction provided during the regular school day (41% of ARI grantees; 35% of AMI grantees) and during summer school (40% of ARI grantees; 43% of AMI grantees) were the most commonly implemented timing strategies for accelerated instruction provided by teachers.
- Funds spent on supplemental curriculum (72% of ARI grantees; 71% of AMI grantees) and supplies/materials (71% of both ARI and AMI grantees) were primarily used to support regular school day instruction.

Student Outcomes

Data reported to TEA indicate that grantees generally reported that students served by ARI/AMI funds, who were struggling at the start of the year, successfully scored on TAKS at grade level by the end of the 2006–07 school year. However, approximately one in three students served by ARI/AMI was reported by grantees as still struggling.

Reading Results

- Of the 634,680 students served by the 2006–07 ARI funds, grantees reported 69% were reading on grade level by the end of the year, compared to 66% in the 2005–06 school year.
- The percentage of ARI students on grade level by the end of the school year varied from 62% in Grade 1 to 76% in Grades 3 and 6.
- ARI results were consistent across all education service center (ESC) regions in the state.

Math Results

- Of the 565,255 students served by the 2006–07 AMI funds, 68% were assessed to be on grade level in mathematics by the end of the year, compared to 69% in the 2005–06 school year. The percentage of AMI students on grade level in math by the end of the school year varied from a low of 58% in Grade 7 to a high of 74% in Grade 5.
- The percentage of AMI students on grade level in math by the end of the school year varied from a low of 53% in ESC Region 17 (Lubbock) to a high of 78% in ESC Region 3 (Victoria).

At the end of the 2006–07 school year the majority of students participating in ARI/AMI-funded services were reported as having been brought up to grade level. However, the percentage of students who grantees reported were not on grade level (i.e., struggling) at the beginning of each year has not decreased.

From the 2003–04 school year to the 2006–07 school year, the percentage of students identified as struggling at the beginning of each year has stayed the same for reading and has increased for math, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of Students Identified by ARI/AMI Grantees as Struggling at Start of Year, 2003–04 to 2006–07 School Years

School Year		
2003–04	29%	20%
2004–05	28%	22%
2005–06	29%	24%
2006–07	29%	25%

Sources: eGrants Database Consolidated Reading Initiative Report, 2006–07, Texas Education Agency; ARI/AMI Final Evaluation Report, Texas Education Agency, 2005–06.

Conclusion

In the 2006–07 school year, the ARI/AMI initiative provided services to a large population of Grade K–7 students who were struggling in reading and math content areas. The ARI/AMI data indicate that grantees perceive a positive short-term impact regarding the ability of students served by ARI/AMI funding to be on grade level in reading (69%) and math (68%) at year end. While participation in services funded by ARI/AMI may have a positive impact on the percentage of students on grade level at the end of each school year, these gains do not appear to carry over to the number of students identified as on grade level at the beginning of the following year. However, this analysis was not longitudinal. It may be that the percentage of students identified as struggling remains constant as new students are identified as struggling.

This report does not attempt to address cost effectiveness. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that while average funding per student has decreased, the success rate of ARI/AMI reported by grantees has remained relatively constant at about two in three students scoring on grade level following participation in ARI/AMI

activities. Evaluation of additional initiatives such as the Intensive Reading Initiative/Intensive Math Initiative (IRI/IMI) may provide insight into reaching additional students who are struggling.

The cover art titled ***Everyone Can Learn*** by **Rita Yeung**, from Garland High School in the Garland Independent School District, was included in the 2007-2008 Texas PTA Reflections art exhibit. The exhibit featured award-winning pieces displayed at the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the Legislative Budget Board from April 21 through August 29, 2008.

