

Evaluation of the Texas Pre-Kindergarten Limited English Proficiency Program: Baseline Findings from the 2008-09 School Year



A Report to the 81st Texas Legislature by the
Office for Planning, Grants, and Evaluation

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Baseline Findings from the 2008-09 School Year**

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

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Executive Summary

The Texas Pre-Kindergarten Limited English Proficiency (Pre-K LEP) program was created to address the educational needs of English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in preschool. The goal of the program is to implement successful multi-age programs serving pre-kindergarten children (three-, four-, and five-year olds) that prepare ELLs for success in school. As specified in statute, the Pre-K LEP program must provide opportunities for the acquisition of English while supporting a child's first language through the provision of social services, appropriate training and modeling, and research-based curricula and supplies to enhance the development of both languages. Instruction must be in both languages so children can learn concepts in the language they understand while developing their English skills. Programs must include bilingual education specialists and continued professional development to support the teachers.

The 79th Texas Legislature allocated \$1.5 million in state funds to establish the first Pre-K LEP pilot program, which was implemented during the 2006-07 school year. A new pilot program was authorized in 2007 by the 80th Texas Legislature, which allocated an additional \$3 million in state funds for the 2008-2009 biennium. In the 2008-09 school year, a total of two school districts, 14 schools, and 546 students are participating in the first year of the new pilot program. In this first year, approximately \$559,111 of the \$3 million allocated for the 2008-2009 biennium will be expended, representing an average of \$1,024 in state funds expended per student.

This report contains baseline results from a legislatively-required evaluation and review of student performance and improvement in the Pre-K LEP pilot program.¹ The report profiles grantees and examines baseline student performance in key measures that predict reading success (vocabulary, letter knowledge, and phonological awareness). Baseline student performance is examined to determine whether results are similar between treatment and

¹ The evaluation requirement was established in 2007 by the 80th Texas Legislature, House Bill 1, General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 47(b).

control groups. If this is true, observed differences between treatment and control groups in evidence during later stages of program implementation could be attributable to the impact of the Pre-K LEP pilot program. Future reports will expand upon these analyses to include an examination of change in student performance over time. This report thus lays the foundation for future analyses that will investigate whether the Pre-K LEP pilot program has an impact on student academic performance.

The following key findings are included in the report:

Campus Characteristics

- Approximately 88% of students at Pre-K LEP schools are Hispanic; 77% are economically disadvantaged; and 74% are classified as at risk of dropping out of school.² All of these percentages are substantially higher than corresponding statewide proportions for elementary schools, consistent with the intent of the program to focus on ELLs.

Classroom Characteristics

- In every Pre-K LEP classroom, students were evenly divided between males and females and the vast majority (90%) of students were classified as LEP.
- A smaller percentage of treatment group classrooms (50%) than control group classrooms (67%) offered full day instruction to students.
- Most (67%) treatment group classrooms employed a “90/10” instructional model, with class time conducted in Spanish 90% of the time and in English 10% of the time. By contrast, most (67%) control group classrooms provided instruction in Spanish and English in equal amounts (“50/50” instructional model).

² “Economically disadvantaged” is defined as eligible for free or reduced-price lunch or eligible for other public assistance. A student is identified as at risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria found in Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.081.) This definition includes students who are of limited English proficiency.

Teacher Characteristics

- Approximately 30% of teachers in the treatment group, and 36% of teachers in the control group, were certified to teach in a field related to providing instruction to ELLs.
- On average, teachers in the treatment group had nine years of experience and had been in their current position for seven years. By contrast, control group teachers had an average of 16 years of experience and had been in their current position for an average of 12 years.

Baseline Student Performance

- Statistical differences at baseline between treatment and control groups were observed in English results for three key measures that predict reading success, all of which fall under the category of Phonological Awareness (Listening, Rhyming 1, and Rhyming 2).
- Statistical differences at baseline were also observed in Spanish results for the same three key measures that predict reading success, in addition to an observed statistical difference for student Letter Knowledge.

The presence of differences in classroom and teacher characteristics, and in student performance at baseline, means that treatment and control groups were not comparable at program inception. In terms of student progress monitoring, baseline differences were in favor of students in the control group in every instance, who outperformed students in the treatment group in both English and Spanish versions of the assessments. These differences between groups will need to be adjusted for in future analyses for student performance results to be comparable.

Link to full text:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/progeval/LimitedEnglish/Pre-K-LEP_1208.pdf

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.



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