Evaluation of the Texas Grants to Reduce Academic Dropouts Program

**Program Activities Implemented
Summer 2004 Through Summer 2005**

October 2006

Prepared by
The Evaluation Group
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture
College of Education and Human Development
Texas A&M University
412 Harrington Tower
4232 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-4232

Prepared for the Texas Education Agency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The purpose of the Texas Grants to Reduce Academic Dropouts program, also referred to as the Texas Dropout Prevention Grant (TXDPG) program, was to provide funding for intervention programs that would result in increased numbers of students earning a high school diploma. The goals of the grant program were twofold: to increase the number of students who graduate from high school in districts that exhibited lower than state average completion rates, and to proactively address the underlying factors that cause some students to drop out of school prior to receiving their high school diploma. This report presents descriptive information on program strategies and activities funded by the TXDPG program across four semesters of the grant period: Summer 2004, Fall 2004, Spring 2005, and Summer 2005.

A total of 61 campuses in 12 districts received a TXDPG award to provide services to targeted students. The majority of districts served high school students only, while three districts also served Grade 8 students on 14 campuses. Progress reports completed by grantees at the end of each semester documented the activities that were conducted at each campus and the number of students served by each activity.

Activities Implemented during the 2004-2005 Regular School Year

Campuses offered an average of about 10 different activities during the regular school year semesters, a wider range of choices than was offered during the summer sessions. The most commonly funded strategies across both terms were Computer-Aided Instruction, Expanded Learning Opportunities, Professional Development for Teachers, and Tutoring, while the least commonly funded strategies were Work Study programs and Dual High School/College Course Credit programs. Student participation rates were higher in the spring semester for all but one grant activity. Staff participation was also higher in the spring term, especially among teachers. Also, a higher percentage of staff was TXDPG-funded during the spring term than the fall term. These patterns of activity may reflect that the majority of campuses had had enough time to achieve high levels of grant implementation by the Spring 2005 term.

Activities Implemented during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005

In 2004, 39% of awarded grantees conducted TXDPG-funded summer programs while in 2005, two-thirds (67%) of campuses submitting progress report data indicated that they had a TXDPG summer school program. During both summer terms, campuses served an average of about 70 students. The most common strategy implemented in both summer sessions were Credit Recovery programs and Computer-Aided Instruction.

Several activities were implemented less frequently in Summer 2005 than in Summer 2004. The use of support activities such as Tutoring, Guidance, and Mentoring decreased significantly in Summer 2005. College/Career Planning activities and the expansion of the Ninth Grade Success Initiative (NGSI) also decreased. Decreases may indicate a perception by the schools that these activities were not successful, or that they were too costly relative to other strategies.

Four groups of school staff provided direct and indirect services during each summer program: 1) Highly Qualified Teachers, 2) Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants, 3) Administrators, and 4) Counselors. More staff participated during the Summer 2005 term but a smaller percentage was funded by the grant.

Most/Least Effective Strategies as Rated by Grantees

Over one-third of campuses identified Tutoring/homework help as the most effective allowable activity. Summer school and Plato software (used in accelerated credit accrual programs) were identified by some campuses as the most effective allowable activities, but were identified by other campuses as the least effective activities allowable under the TXDPG grant program. The fact that the perceived effectiveness of several activities varied widely across campuses suggests that some campuses experienced problems implementing certain activities and may require assistance with these activities in the future.

Conclusions

In general, projects began slowly as the first term of the project year, Summer 2004, saw the smallest number of students served. Delivery of TXDPG-funded services seemed to peak during the Spring 2005 term as large numbers of students were served and staff were funded. This rate

of increase in activity availability and student participation over the course of the school year may reflect the time needed for campuses to fully implement new grant-funded programs.

The overall emphasis on Credit Recovery and Computer-Aided Instruction suggests that project campuses focused on providing direct services that address the first goal of the TXDPG program, to increase the number of students who graduate from high school. Project campuses did not tend to emphasize the indirect services that target the second goal of the grant, i.e., to proactively address the underlying factors that cause some students to drop out of school prior to receiving a high school diploma.

The number of campuses supporting some activities believed to be effective (both in the literature and by the grantee schools), such as Tutoring and Mentoring, decreased toward the end of the grant. It is of concern that these activities were not sustained throughout the TXDPG program.

INTRODUCTION

Background: Texas Dropout Rates

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) defines a dropout as "a student who is enrolled in school at some time during the school year but either leaves school during the school year without an approved excuse or completes the school year and does not return the following year" (TEA, 2006, p 33). A particularly informative way to examine statewide dropout rates is to look at a cohort of students, namely those entering Grade 9 in a given year, and following them for four years to graduation. This longitudinal dropout rate for the 2001-2002 Grade 9 cohort (expected to graduate in 2005, and the most recent data available) was 4.3%, higher than the 3.9% longitudinal dropout rate in 2004. Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students had the highest longitudinal dropout rates, at 6.9% and 6.7%, respectively, more than three times higher than the longitudinal dropout rate for white students (2.0%).

According to TEA data, in 2004-2005 the average statewide dropout rate for students in Grades 9-12 was 1.3%, a slight increase from the 1.2% rate in 2003-2004. In terms of ethnicity, the annual dropout rate for Hispanic students (2.0%), African-American students (1.7%), and Native American students (1.6%) was more than twice as high as that for white students (0.7%) and Asian/Pacific Islander students (0.5%) during the same time period. Economically disadvantaged students also demonstrated higher dropout rates at 1.6%. For all students, dropout rates were highest in Grades 11 and 12 (1.5% and 1.6%, respectively).

The Texas High School Project

As part of Texas' statewide efforts to improve students' academic performance, increase the number of students graduating from high school, as well as, and close the achievement gap for minority and economically disadvantaged students, the 77th Legislature (2001) passed Senate Bill (SB) 702, requiring the development of a statewide plan to reduce the dropout rate in Texas public schools. Plans for creating and implementing a comprehensive and systematic program for dropout prevention included new dropout reporting criteria and requirements. The new criteria expanded the definition of students at risk of dropping out of school, thereby increasing the number of students eligible for dropout prevention and recovery programs.

The Texas High School Project (THSP), a public-private partnership to improve Texas high schools, was established in 2003. THSP partners include the Office of the Governor, TEA, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and others. The project's private philanthropic investments are managed by the Communities Foundation of Texas, while state and federal investments are managed by TEA. Additional funds, including $29 million in general revenue and $1 million in federal funds in each fiscal year of the 2003-2005 biennium, were provided through Rider 67 of the *General Appropriations Act*. This rider funded the Texas High School Completion and Success grant program to support the establishment and implementation of initiatives designed to increase the number of students who finish high school. This program, along with the TXDPG program, are components of the larger THSP.

The intent of the TXDPG program was to provide funding for dropout-related intervention programs that would result in increased numbers of students attaining a comprehensive base of knowledge and skills and earning a high school diploma. The goals of the grant program were to increase the number of students who graduate from high school in districts that exhibited lower than state average completion rates, and to proactively address some of the issues that are cited as underlying causal factors leading to students dropping out of school prior to receiving their high school diploma.

Research on Dropout Prevention Strategies
The TXDPG program focused its resources on activities that are described in the dropout prevention literature as effective in increasing the number of students who receive their high school diploma. The following two sections review some of the dropout literature and show how the Texas dropout prevention grant incorporates findings from previous research.

The literature points to a variety of reasons for students leaving school early. Black (2003) found that while students and their families tend to blame contextual factors of the school environment as responsible for high dropout rates, school officials tend to blame familial and community variables. Christianson and Thurlow (2004) have found that early withdrawal from school "reflects a complex interplay among student, family, school, and community variables"

(p. 37). They argued that dropping out of school is not an instantaneous decision but actually the end result of a process that develops over many years of the student's academic life. Most researchers believe potential dropouts signal their intention to leave—that the physical act of withdrawing from school is often preceded by recognizable indicators (Christenson, Sinclair, Lehr, & Godber, 2001; Lehr, Johnson, Bremer, Cosio, & Thompson, 2004; Thornburgh, 2006; Viadero, 2006). It appears reasonable to assume, therefore, that any intervention must begin early and be maintained over a long period of time in order to be successful.

Although studies conducted over the last four decades have isolated a number of dropout indicators (Viadero, 2006), researchers differ in their assessment of which ones are the strongest at predicting which students will exit school early. Several studies have found poor academic performance to be the strongest predictor of risk of dropping out (Hess et al., 1987; TEA, 2006; Wood 1994, Woods, 2001), but 88% of the dropouts interviewed in a recent survey sponsored by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation reported they were earning passing grades at the time they quit school (as cited in Viadero). Viadero pointed to other studies identifying the most important predictor of future dropout from school was a student's retention of at least one grade in either elementary or middle school. Additional predictors include coming from a low socio-economic background, excessive mobility, frequent absenteeism from school, low level of engagement with the school, speaking English as a second language, and becoming pregnant (Lever et al., 2004; Weist, Randall, & Tashman, 2000; Woods, 2001). Dynarski and Gleason (2002) theorized that programs successful at reducing dropout rates are rare because many programs utilize a one-size-fits-all approach; when designing potential interventions, these programs fail to address the unique characteristics and issues facing individual students. Woods (2001), of the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, reviewed research findings regarding the characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs and noted that dropouts have dissimilar characteristics, thus requiring different kinds of intervention programs that respond to their individual circumstances and needs.

Dynarski and Gleason (2002) theorized that one reason so few dropout intervention programs succeed is because of the difficulty in matching individual students with the specific strategies that would be most useful to each. To respond to individual circumstances and needs, different

dropout prevention strategies can be utilized alone or in combination, depending on the different subgroups within a particular educational setting. Studies found that successful intervention programs tend to help at-risk students develop a sense of engagement or attachment with the school or with a respected adult in the school (Christianson & Thurlow, 2004; Dynarski & Gleason; Fashola & Slavin, 1998; Lehr et al., 2004). One model of dropout prevention – the participation-identification model – posits that students who are encouraged to participate in school activities become more engaged with the school's culture and thus are more likely to persevere (Finn, 1989). Different ways that schools can encourage student engagement include providing individualized instruction, remediation and accelerated instruction, counseling and mentorship, and flexible programming and scheduling. Other strategies that may have a positive impact on keeping students in school include supporting a trained and committed staff, increasing parental involvement, and collaborating with the community and businesses (Slavin & Fashola, 1998).

The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N, 2004), located at Clemson University, has identified 15 effective strategies that positively impact the dropout rate. These include systemic renewal at the school level, safe learning environments, family engagement, early childhood education, and early literacy development. Other basic core strategies identified by NDPC/N include mentoring/tutoring, service learning, alternative schooling, and after-school opportunities. Jobs for the Future, an organization dedicated to accelerating opportunities for people to advance in education and careers, points to high academic standards transparently linked to future learning and work opportunities, individualized flexible programs with high expectations and clear rules of behavior, and opportunities for youth to catch up and accelerate knowledge and skills as ways to increase graduation rates (Jobs for the Future, 2004). Strategies to reduce dropout rates recommended by researchers from Johns Hopkins University include providing high quality educational experiences in elementary and middle school, improving the quality of the curriculum in secondary school, and identifying common challenges to student success and assisting students to address them (Fashola & Slavin, 1998). Further research has found that smaller schools, individualized attention, and strong academic intervention, particularly in Grade 9, appear to improve the odds that students will finish high school (Texas Center for Education Research, 2002).

According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2002a), the process for dropping out of school begins early and strategies that improve student achievement are those that reduce the dropout rate. An essential strategy is to identify at-risk students early and provide them with both academic and social interventions to help them overcome problems that begin in preschool and continue through elementary, middle and high school.

The Texas Grants to Reduce Academic Dropouts Program

The allowable strategies and activities under the TXDPG program were based on the above research findings on effective dropout prevention strategies. Grant funds totaling $5 million were provided to 61 campuses across the state for these campuses to implement:

- Early Intervention programs;
- Programs that reduce student–to-counselor ratios for schools with high dropout rates;
- Credit Recovery programs that help students earn course credit;
- Flexible Scheduling and Work Study programs; and,
- After-school, evening, and summer learning opportunities.

This report is organized in six major sections. Following this introductory first section, the second section gives an overview of all allowable strategies and activities. The third and fourth sections describe strategies and activities implemented and students served with TXDPG funds during the regular school year and the summer semesters, respectively. Because summer school enrollment is almost exclusively focused on students who are behind academically and summer activities are focused on helping these students catch up to where they should be, the summer programs are discussed separately. The fifth section describes the most and least effective activities as reported by project campuses. Conclusions are provided in the final section.

ALLOWABLE GRANT ACTIVITIES

Allowable grant activities under the TXDPG program were based on the strategies described as effective in the dropout prevention and recovery literature, and on the recommendations of focus groups held at TEA. These activities were offered as a means of lowering the risk of students dropping out of school and increasing high school completion rates. Grant recipients directed funds towards activities they believed would best serve the needs of targeted students in their district. These activities are described in detail below.

Credit Accrual Programs

Three activities were tied to helping students acquire needed credits: credit recovery, accelerated credit accrual programs, and "trailer" courses.

- Credit Recovery programs allow students to make up credits they are missing due to failing a course. Most of these programs utilize online instruction and often take place in labs or during alternative times such as after school or on weekends.

- Accelerated Credit Accrual programs also allow students to acquire needed credits. After identifying the parts of a course that have been failed, students receive fast-paced instruction in only these areas. Software programs commonly used in accelerated instruction include, but are not limited to, Plato, Nova-net and School-Net.

- Trailer Courses are offered in the term immediately following the semester of a failed course. Students in Trailer Courses are able to maintain the required number of credits because progression to the next course is not delayed until the failed course is completed. These courses are not self-paced and do not offer the intensive instruction common to other credit accrual programs.

Staff Hiring and Development

Research has found that teacher quality is an important factor in reducing dropout rates. Campuses that include a greater percentage of minimally educated teachers or teachers with little experience tend to have a higher dropout rate (Principals' Partnership, 2006). Three activities were directly related to improving the quality of classroom instruction:

- Professional Development for teachers and counselors provides staff with training specific to the needs of targeted students.

- Hiring of Additional Counselors serves to reduce the student-to-counselor ratio. Counselors are an essential part of the TXDPG program because in addition to providing guidance, they identify areas of weakness and then develop a plan to improve academic standing of each targeted student. Additional counselors enabled campuses to provide services that best fit the specific needs of each student.
- Funding of Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals or Teacher Assistants contributes to the program objectives by either helping students directly with academic or guidance matters or indirectly by aiding teachers.

Expanded Learning Opportunities

For many students targeted by the TXDPG program, the regular school day did not allow enough time to make up missing or failed credits. Altering the time frame of the regular school day allows students to acquire needed credits with as little delay as possible.

- Expanded Learning Opportunities extend or augment the regular school day to include after-school, evening, weekend and summer schedules.
- Flexible Entry/Exit Courses also expand the time available to students. These courses may take place in a credit recovery lab where a student is enrolled in one course and makes up missing credits in another at the same time. Students may also be scheduled into an elective to make up missing credits.
- Flexible Scheduling is similar to flexible entry/exit courses in that students can make up missing credits in one course while enrolled in another. However, in comparison to flexible entry/exit courses, flexible scheduling is generally regarded as a component of program development.

Guidance and Support Services

This category focused on activities and services that address non-academic circumstances that typically contribute to a student's failure to complete high school.

- Peer and Adult Mentoring provides students with skills to improve their academic decision-making and problem-solving. A key value of mentors is that a student, teacher or other staff member takes a specific interest in the academic success of a student.

- Character Education activities address issues such as anger management, drug use, and gang participation.
- Services for Pregnant/Parenting Students are focused on helping these students remain in school and complete their education.

Early Intervention

These activities targeted students who exhibit early signs of not being likely to complete high school in the prescribed time.

- Early Intervention programs are designed to look for the first signs that a student will be at-risk for not completing high school in a four-year period. Students are provided with one or more forms of academic assistance such as after-school tutoring and additional assessment and remediation. This type of program ensures that at-risk students receive support services that address their specific needs as soon as possible.
- Ninth Grade Success Initiative (NGSI) targets Grade 9 students who exhibit signs of not being likely to complete high school. The program is designed to increase academic achievement, offer credit recovery and provide support services to Grade 9 students in at-risk situations.

Student Achievement

Three activities fell into the broad category of enhancing student achievement and improving academic standing by addressing areas of academic weakness:

- Online Diagnostic Assessment allows students to receive immediate feedback on their academic status through the use of a computer program. These programs identify the specific areas that have been passed and failed by the student.
- Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) is used for drill and practice once areas of weakness have been identified, as tutorials or simulation activities. CAI can be offered either by itself or as a supplement to traditional teacher directed instruction.
- Tutoring is another means by which students can improve skill in a particular area. Teachers certified in a particular field or content area work closely with students who need extra instruction.

College and Career Preparation

These activities were designed to prepare students for life after high school, whether that entails career and/or college.

- <u>Work Study</u> programs allow students with financial concerns to stay in school and progress from one grade to the next while gaining valuable work experience. Work study students earn income and academic credits by participating in cooperative education, which involves a partnership between the school and the jobsite.

- <u>Service Learning</u> provides a student with the opportunity to do service work or volunteer work in the community. In addition to training and an extensive support network for the students involved, some schools allow students to earn elective credit for service learning.

- <u>Career and College Awareness</u> activities provide students with the opportunity to explore and plan for their immediate future.

- <u>Dual Credit Courses</u> allow students to earn both high school and college credit by taking a single course. Career and technology courses are common examples of dual credit courses.

Parental Involvement

The activities falling into this category were focused on building education-related parenting skills, primarily for families in at-risk situations. These activities attempt to engage parents in the support of their own and their child's learning at home and at school. Research has found that children whose parents are actively involved with their schooling are less likely to experience attendance problems and are more likely to graduate (Rumberger, 2001; Schwartz, 1995). Parental involvement has been shown to contribute to increased student attendance, higher grades and regular promotion from one grade to the next. These activities provide indirect support to students through their parents:

- <u>Involving parents in the educational process and in volunteer programs</u> include recruiting parents to help teachers with tutoring and student learning, assisting with campus events such as fundraisers, and providing non-academic instruction in various topics.

- <u>Educational Training for Parents</u> includes training workshops that address how parents can partner with teachers to improve their child's learning.

- <u>Home Visits</u> made by school personnel are intended to forge a connection with parents who are not involved in their child's education.
- <u>Bilingual Personnel and Materials</u> printed in Spanish are designed to better inform and engage Spanish-speaking families in the education process.
- <u>Awareness Campaigns in Print and Broadcast Media</u> serve to recruit volunteers and advertise program activities.

EVALUATION OF THE TXDPG PROGRAM

In addition to its funding of programs, Rider 67 of the *General Appropriations Act* also authorized a comprehensive evaluation of those programs funded through the rider, including the Texas High School Completion and Success grant program and the TXDPG. The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University (TEG) conducted an evaluation of TXDPG to document the grant activities that had been funded during the grant period.

TEG evaluated the TXDPG program by identifying the activities that grantee campuses supported with grant funds. This report presents descriptive information on program strategies and activities funded by the TXDPG program across four complete semesters that fell within the grant period that began in February 2004 and concluded in February 2006. A total of 61 campuses in 12 districts received a TXDPG award to provide services to targeted students. The majority of districts served high school students only, but three districts also served Grade 8 students on 14 campuses.

All information contained in this report is based only on campuses that submitted a Project Progress Report (PPR) at the end of each of four semesters (Summer 2004, Fall 2004, Spring 2005, and Summer 2005).[1] The PPR collected information on the activities conducted at each campus and the number of students served by that activity. The number of reports submitted for each semester were:

   PPR1 (Summer 2004): 64
   PPR2 (Fall 2004): 57
   PPR3 (Spring 2005): 51
   PPR4 (Summer 2005): 48

---

[1] Three campuses were simultaneously served by two separate grant organization, resulting in six progress reports for these three campuses. Because it is impossible to isolate which services came from which organizations for those three campuses, all progress reports were included for this report. Thus, the total number of PPRs is 64, and percentages of campuses in the following tables are based on this number.

RESULTS FOR 2004-2005 REGULAR SCHOOL YEAR

Grant-Funded Strategies and Activities

The regular school year of the TXDPG program included the Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 semesters. Grantees developed TXDPG programs during the regular school year by directing funds toward strategies and activities that targeted the specific needs of their students. The number of campuses that directed grant funds toward each allowable strategy and activity are presented in Tables 1 through 8 below. The percentages in these tables are based on the number of campuses that submitted the PPR for that period: 57 for Fall 2004 and 51 for Spring 2005.

The reporting campuses offered an average of about 10 different grant-related activities during both of the regular school year semesters. The most commonly funded strategies across both terms were Computer-Aided Instruction, Expanded Learning Opportunities, Professional Development for teachers, and Tutoring. Each of these activities was funded by about half or more of reporting campuses in both terms. Credit Recovery programs, the dominant strategy offered during summer terms, were also employed frequently. A majority of participating campuses funded Spanish Language Personnel and Literature to improve interaction with parents.

Strategies that involved one-on-one work with students (Tutoring and Mentoring) were employed by fewer campuses in the spring term than fall. These activities may have been too difficult to maintain by some campuses. While Career and College Awareness and Planning were relatively popular choices of activities to implement among grantee campuses, very few campuses chose to implement Work Study programs, Service Learning opportunities or Dual High School/College Credit opportunities in either the fall or spring semesters. These types of activities require active partnerships between the school and the community, and may be particularly difficult to implement. Interestingly, the number of campuses offering Service Learning opportunities doubled from the fall to the spring semester. Though still a relatively small proportion of campuses (24%), this pattern indicates an area with potential for growth if campuses are given sufficient time to develop these types of partnerships and programs.

Table 1. Campuses Supporting Credit Accrual Strategies and Activities during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Credit Accrual				
Credit Recovery programs	27	47%	32	63%
Accelerated Credit Accrual programs	20	35%	22	43%
Trailer Courses	13	23%	16	31%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Table 2. Campuses Supporting Staff Hiring and Development during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Staff Hiring and Development				
Professional Development for Teachers	37	65%	31	61%
Professional Development for Counselors	21	37%	20	39%
Hiring of Additional Counselors	8	14%	12	24%
Funding of Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals or Teacher Assistants	27	47%	14	27%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 3. Campuses Supporting Expanded Learning Opportunities
during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Expanded Learning Opportunities				
Learning opportunities for students before or after school evening, week-end	30	53%	38	75%
Weekend	17	30%	25	49%
After school	27	47%	32	63%
Evening	2	4%	7	14%
Flexible Scheduling.	26	46%	26	51%
Flexible Entry/Exit Courses.	23	40%	22	43%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 4. Campuses Supporting Guidance and Support Services
during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Guidance and Support Services				
Mentoring by Peers	6	11%	5	10%
Mentoring by Adults	26	46%	17	33%
Character Education	29	51%	21	41%
Services for Pregnant/Parenting Students	7	12%	12	24%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 5. Campuses Supporting Early Intervention Activities
during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Early Intervention				
Early Intervention programs targeting at-risk students	22	39%	22	43%
Expansion of Ninth Grade Success Initiative grant program	22	39%	17	33%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Table 6. Campuses Supporting Student Achievement Strategies and Activities during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Student Achievement				
Computer-Aided Instruction	43	75%	37	72%
Online Diagnostic Assessment for students	16	28%	16	31%
High Quality Tutoring services for students identified as at-risk	40	70%	25	49%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Table 7. Campuses Supporting College and Career Preparation Strategies and Activities during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
College/Career Preparation				
Service Learning opportunities for students	6	11%	12	24%
Work Study programs	7	12%	5	10%
Career Awareness/Planning activities for students	27	47%	22	43%
College Awareness/Planning activities for students	28	49%	26	51%
Dual High School/College Course Credit opportunities	4	7%	4	8%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 8. Campuses Supporting Parental Involvement Strategies and Activities
during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Fall 2004 N=57		Spring 2005 N=51	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Parental Involvement				
Home Visits	18	32%	21	41%
Educational or Career Training for Parents	7	12%	9	18%
Efforts to Involve Parents in the Educational Process	27	47%	23	45%
Printed Materials in the Spanish language or Bilingual Personnel	41	72%	34	67%
Parent or Community Volunteer Programs (non-mentoring)	16	28%	12	24%
Advertisement of Program Features/Recruitment via the Media	23	40%	14	27%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Student Participation in Activities during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005

Table 9 shows the number of high school and elementary/middle school students served during each regular term of the school year. Approximately equal numbers of students received grant-funded services during each term: an average of 468 per reporting campus in the fall and 505 per reporting campus in the spring. Although the total number of Grade 5 through Grade 8 students was similar across terms, far more Grade 6 and 7 students received services during the spring term. In general, only three districts served students in Grades 5 through 8; and accordingly they comprised a small proportion of the total students who received services.

Table 9. Students Served during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005

Grade	Students Served Fall 2004	Students Served Spring 2005
9	9,573	8,520
10	6,227	5,715
11	5,017	5,090
12	4,211	4,789
High School Total	25,028	24,114
5	154	160
6	198	451
7	251	463
8	1,048	600
Elementary and Middle School Total	1,651	1,674
Students Served	26,679	25,788

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Table 10 shows the level of student participation in each activity during the fall and spring terms. The average number of activities students were engaged in during the fall semester was 1.1, while in the spring the average number of activities per student was 1.9. Thus, participation in many activities was higher in the spring term, as more students took part in more grant-funded activities. The greatest participation across both terms was in Computer-Aided Instruction. Other activities that were heavily utilized in the spring were College Awareness and Career Planning and Online Diagnostics. Each of these three activities saw greatly increased participation in comparison to the fall term. A possible explanation is that students may have been more mindful of post-high school planning during the spring term as graduation neared and the topic became more relevant.

Online Diagnostic assessment also saw a large increase in participation from Fall 2004 to Spring 2005, indicating that this activity took some time for get students to become involved with, but was broadly implemented toward the end of the grant period. Across the four semesters, very few students participated in Work Study programs or took advantage of services for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students.

Parental Involvement participation rates were consistently low across both terms. This may reflect either a low priority placed on activities that involve parents, or the difficulty with which schools are able to successfully reach out and engage parents.

Table 10. Number of Students Served by Grant-funded Strategies and Activities during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005

Strategy /Activity	Students Served Fall 2004		Students Served Spring 2005	
	Number	Percentage of Total Students Served[1]	Number	Percentage of Total Students Served[2]
Student Achievement				
Online Diagnostic Assessment	1,771	7%	4,483	17%
High Quality Tutoring	2,806	11%	3,387	13%
Computer Aided Instruction	3,978	15%	6,195	24%
Credit Accrual				
Credit Recovery programs	2,023	8%	4,409	17%
Accelerated Credit Accrual programs	1,703	6%	2,812	11%
Dual High School/College Course Credit opportunities	108	<1%	308	1%
Trailer Courses	1,373	5%	2,312	9%
Flexible Scheduling	2,421	9%	3,620	14%
Guidance and Support Services				
Character Education (e.g., anger management, drug, gang, pregnancy prevention)	1,950	7%	2,394	9%
Services for Pregnant/Parenting Students	212	<1%	199	<1%
Service Learning opportunities	209	<1%	450	2%
Early Intervention				
Early Intervention programs for at-risk students	1,657	6%	3,440	13%
Expansion of the Ninth Grade Success Initiative	3,694	14%	2,547	9%
College and Career Preparation				
Work Study programs	87	<1%	303	1%
Career Awareness/Planning activities	1,659	6%	5,026	19%
College Awareness/Planning activities	2,369	9%	5,392	21%
Parental Involvement				
Home Visits	610	2%	1,480	6%
Educational or Career Training for Parents	334	1%	805	3%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Notes: [1] Denominator is the number of students served during Fall 2004 (26,679).
  [2] Denominator is the number of students served during Spring 2005 (25,788).

Staff Participation during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 Terms

Table 11 shows the number and type of staff who received training in the needs of diverse learners during each semester. Teachers were by far the largest group who received training, which is not surprising given that they provide direct instruction to students.

Table 11. Staff Who Received Training in the Needs of Diverse Learners
during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005

STAFF	Fall 2004	Spring 2005
Highly Qualified Teachers	1,554	1,321
Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants	44	37
Counselors	53	55
Total	1,651	1,413

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Table 12 shows the number and type of staff who participated in TXDPG activities during the regular school year in relation to the number and type of staff were funded with TXDPG grant money. Staff participation at all levels was higher in the spring term, particularly especially among teachers. Also, a higher percentage of participating staff were TXDPG-funded during the spring term (24%) than the fall term (14%). Interestingly, over 1,500 teachers were trained during Fall 2004 but only 1,225 participated in providing grant-related services.

Table 12. Number of Staff Funded by the Texas Grants to Reduce
Academic Dropouts Program during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005

Staff	Fall 2004			Spring 2005		
	Total Participating Staff	Staff Funded by Grant		Total Participating Staff	Staff Funded by Grant	
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Number	Percent
Highly Qualified Teachers	1225	116	9%	1394	325	23%
Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants	152	45	30%	165	50	30%
Administrators	118	25	21%	120	37	31%
Counselors	132	34	26%	142	32	23%
Total	1627	220	14%	1821	444	24%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Summary of 2004-2005 Regular School Year

During the regular school year of the TXDPG program (Fall 2004 through Spring 2005), campuses offered a wide range of grant-related activities. The most common activities were Computer-Aided Instruction, Expanded Learning Opportunities, Professional Development for teachers, and Tutoring. Each of these activities was funded by about half or more of reporting campuses in both terms. Credit Recovery programs were also common.

Strategies that involved one-on-one work with students (Tutoring and Mentoring) were employed by fewer campuses in the spring term than fall. Some campuses may have found these too difficult to maintain. A large percentage of participating campuses funded Spanish Language Personnel and Literature to improver interaction with parents and increase parental involvement.

Student participation in grant-funded activities in Spring 2005 was greater than or equal to participation rates in the Fall 2004 semester for all but one activity (Expansion of the Ninth Grade Success Initiative). This consistent pattern could indicate that the most campuses had reached successful levels of implementation by this point in the grant period.

Of the staff members who provided direct and indirect grant-funded services, the largest number participated during the Spring 2005 semester. Not surprisingly, teachers were the most common type of staff to deliver services, though paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, and counselors were also involved.

RESULTS FROM 2004 AND 2005 SUMMER TERMS

During the first summer of the grant period, 25 campuses (39% of 64 reporting campuses) held TXDPG-funded summer programs for students targeted by the grant. The number of campuses serving students with grant funds increased during the second summer term to 32 (67% of the 48 reporting campuses).[2] During both summer terms, campuses with a summer program served an average of about 70 students.

Not all campuses intending to implement a TXDPG-funded summer program were able to begin during the first summer of the grant period. In fact, many campuses reported in the comment section of the PPR1 (Summer 2004) that they had intended to support a summer program with TXDPG funds but were not able to because the grant money did not arrive in time. Had this not been the case, more campuses would have conducted summer school and more students would have received services during Summer 2004.

Grant-Funded Strategies and Activities

The PPR administered at the ends of Summer 2004 and Summer 2005 documented the strategies and activities that were implemented on project campuses. The number of campuses that directed funds toward each allowable strategy and activity are presented in Tables 13 through 20. The percentages in all tables (with the exception of Table 14) are based on the number of reporting campuses that held a summer program during that period; 25 for Summer 2004 and 32 for Summer 2005. These percentages allow comparisons of the popularity of particular strategies between the two summer sessions. Since hiring of staff and professional development activities are not directly related to summer school (i.e., they can occur in the absence of a summer program), the percentages in Table 14 are based on the total number of responding campuses (64 for Summer 2004 and 48 for Summer 2005).

The array of program activities supported in Summer 2004 had narrowed somewhat by Summer 2005, possibly reflecting schools' focus on strategies that worked better or were more cost effective. In Summer 2004, the 25 campuses that ran summer sessions offered an average of 7.6

---

[2] During Summer 2005, students in two separate districts attended summer school at a single campus. Information on location of summer programs was not collected on the Summer 2004 progress report (PPR1).

different TXDPG-funded activities, while in Summer 2005 the 32 reporting summer schools averaged only 4.8 different activities, resulting in larger numbers of students participating in a reduced number of grant-funded activities during Summer 2005.

The most common strategy implemented in both summer sessions was Credit Recovery programs (reported by about 75% of participating campuses), followed by Computer-Aided Instruction (over 50% of campuses). Along with activities that were consistently implemented, several activities were implemented more or less frequently in the second summer session than the first. Flexible Scheduling, Flexible Entry/Exit Courses and Trailer Courses are a few examples. This indicates either that the campuses had plans to try different activities in the different sessions, or that their experience with the first session led to a change in strategy.

Staff enhancement activities (hiring and professional development) were used by a higher percentage of reporting campuses in Summer 2005 than in Summer 2004. The increase in 2005 may indicate that schools felt that this was a better use of grant funds than other activities, or this increase could simply reflect that staff enhancement activities, particularly hiring decisions, take longer to implement once grant funds become available.

Not surprisingly, only a handful of campuses offered weekend, after-school or evening schedules during either summer. Similarly, only a few campuses elected to support guidance and support services or early intervention activities during the summer sessions. An exception to this trend occurred for the expansion of the NGSI. Even though only 15 campuses supported this initiative for Grade 9 students, a relatively large percentage of students participated in these services.

Several activities were notably less popular in 2005 than in 2004. The percentage of campuses that implemented support activities such as tutoring, guidance, and mentoring decreased significantly in Summer 2005. College and career planning activities, among the most widely implemented strategies in 2004, were much less frequent in 2005. Finally, expansion of the NGSI was all but phased out from 2004 to 2005. These decreases may indicate a perception by the schools that these activities were not successful, or that they were too costly relative to other strategies.

**Table 13. Campuses Supporting Credit Accrual Strategies and Activities
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Credit Accrual				
Credit Recovery programs	19	76%	24	75%
Accelerated Credit Accrual programs	11	44%	6	19%
Trailer Courses	6	24%	12	38%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 14. Campuses Supporting Staff Hiring and Development
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=64		Summer 2005 N=48	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Staff Hiring and Development				
Professional Development for Teachers	30	47%	28	58%
Professional Development for Counselors	5	8%	9	19%
Hiring of Additional Counselors	8	13%	14	29%
Funding of highly qualified paraprofessionals or teacher assistants to assist teaching staff	3	5%	14	29%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 15. Campuses Supporting Expanded Learning Opportunities
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Expanded Learning Opportunities				
Learning Opportunities for Students after School				
Weekend	*	NA	1	3%
After school	*	NA	3	9%
Evening	*	NA	1	3%
Summer	25	100%	32	100%
Flexible Scheduling.	6	24%	12	38%
Flexible Entry/Exit Courses	10	40%	16	50%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Note: * Information on the type of expanded learning opportunity was not collected on PPR1 (Summer 2004).

**Table 16. Campuses Supporting Guidance and Support Services
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Guidance and Support Services				
Mentoring by Peers	5	20%	1	3%
Mentoring by Adults	10	40%	3	9%
Character Education (e.g., anger management, drug, gang, pregnancy prevention)	7	28%	6	19%
Services for Pregnant/Parenting Students	5	20%	4	13%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 17. Campuses Supporting Early Intervention Activities
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Early Intervention				
Early Intervention programs targeting at-risk students	2	8%	3	9%
Expansion of Ninth Grade Success Initiative grant program	15	60%	2	6%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 18. Campuses Supporting Student Achievement Strategies and Activities
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Student Achievement				
Computer Aided Instruction	14	56%	16	50%
Online Diagnostic Assessment for students.	8	32%	8	25%
High Quality Tutoring services for students identified as at-risk.	10	40%	5	16%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 19. Campuses Supporting College and Career Preparation
Strategies and Activities during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
College/Career Preparation				
Service Learning opportunities for students	1	4%	1	3%
Work Study programs	2	8%	0	0
Career Awareness/Planning activities for students	13	52%	3	9%
College Awareness/Planning activities for students	12	48%	2	6%
Dual High School/College Course Credit opportunities	1	4%	0	0

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

**Table 20. Campuses Supporting Parental Involvement Strategies and
Activities during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	Summer 2004 N=25		Summer 2005 N=32	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Parental Involvement				
Home Visits	5	20%	1	3%
Educational or Career Training for parents	4	16%	1	3%
Efforts to Involve Parents in the Educational Process	10	40%	15	47%
Printed Materials in the Spanish language or Bilingual Personnel	15	60%	10	31%
Parent or Community Volunteer Programs (non-mentoring)	1	4%	0	0%
Advertisement of Program Features/Recruitment via the Media	17	68%	4	13%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M
University, 2006.

Student Participation in Activities during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005

Table 21 shows that more Grade 9 and 10 students were served by the TXDPG program than
grade 11 and 12 students, most likely because they would benefit the most from early
intervention. The percentage of Grade 12 students served decreased from 15% of all students
served in 2004 to 10% in 2005. This may reflect the schools' decision to direct efforts to early
intervention and to students with a higher probability of improvement.

Table 21. Students Served During Summer 2004 and Summer 2005

Grade	Students Served Summer 2004	Students Served Summer 2005
	Number	Number
8	0	83
9	480	781
10	734	913
11	271	435
12	258	228
High School Total	1,743	2,357

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004 and PPR4 Summer 2005, The Evaluation Group at Texas
A&M University, 2006.

Table 22 shows the level of student participation in activities during each summer school
program. Across both summer programs, a large majority of students participated in Credit

Recovery programs. Only two other activities involved more than 30% of the students participating in that session: the NGSI program in Summer 2004, and Computer-Aided Instruction in Summer 2005, with nearly triple the percentage from the year before (although a majority of campuses provided this activity in both sessions).

The reduction in the variety of activities offered in Summer 2005 resulted in much larger numbers of students participating in some activities. In an extreme example, only two campuses offered College Planning activities in Summer 2005, but 477 students participated. Other activities offered in Summer 2005 that averaged more than 90 students per campus were Career Planning, the Expansion of the NGSI and Accelerated Credit Accrual. In Summer 2004, only Credit Recovery programs and Trailer Courses averaged more than 50 students per campus.

Two technological strategies, Computer-Aided Instruction and Online Diagnostic Assessment resulted in some of the largest gains in popularity between the two summer sessions, despite not being offered at many campuses. By contrast, Trailer Courses were much less widely used in Summer 2005, with only 24 students per campus, than in the previous summer. These differing trends in popularity may be indicative of a perceived lack of effectiveness of these strategies on the part of either the students or counselors.

Table 22. Number of Students Served by Grant-funded Strategies and Activities during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005

Strategy /Activity	Students Served Summer 2004 N=1743		Students Served Summer 2005 N=2440	
	Number	Percentage of Total Students Served	Number	Percentage of Total Students Served
Student Achievement				
Online Diagnostic Assessment	191	11%	624	26%
High Quality Tutoring services	272	16%	242	10%
Computer Aided Instruction	195	11%	764	31%
Credit Accrual				
Credit Recovery programs	1,200	69%	2,008	82%
Accelerated Credit Accrual programs	260	15%	548	22%
Trailer Courses	314	18%	287	12%
Flexible Scheduling	197	11%	575	24%
Guidance and Support Services				
Character Education (e.g., anger management, drug, gang, pregnancy prevention)	113	6%	399	16%
Services for Pregnant/Parenting Students	5	<1%	159	7%
Early Intervention				
Early Intervention programs for at-risk students	46	3%	151	6%
Expansion of the NGSI grant program	597	34%	218	9%
College and Career Preparation				
Work Study programs	5	<1%	0	0
Career Awareness/Planning activities	334	19%	356	15%
College Awareness/Planning activities	290	17%	477	20%
Dual High School/College Course Credit opportunities	25	1%	0	0
Service Learning opportunities for students	0	0	100	4%
Parental Involvement				
Home Visits	54	3%	10	<1%
Educational or Career Training for Parents	112	6%	150	6%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Staff Participation during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005

Four groups of school staff provided direct and indirect services during each summer program: Highly Qualified Teachers; Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants; Administrators; and Counselors. Teachers provide direct services to students in the form of instruction, and counselors assess students on their academic progress and advise them on areas that need improvement. Campuses were able to hire Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants to help teachers with instruction.

Table 23 presents the number and type of staff who participated in the TXDPG program during each summer in relation to the number who were funded. A comparison of the two summer terms shows that more staff participated during the Summer 2005 term but a smaller percentage of them were funded by the grant. A notable exception is that over 90% of Paraprofessionals were funded during Summer 2005. Campuses may have decided that funds were better spent on personnel to assist with teaching rather than on teachers themselves. Another possibility is that other funding streams became available at the campuses to cover teacher pay, so TXPDG funds were shifted to support more Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants.

**Table 23. Staff Who Participated and Were Funded
during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005**

Staff	Summer 2004			Summer 2005		
	Total Participating Staff	Staff Funded by Grant		Total Participating Staff	Staff Funded by Grant	
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Number	Percent
Highly Qualified Teachers	228	212	93%	361	274	76%
Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants	41	17	42%	134	123	92%
Administrators	37	18	49%	61	29	48%
Counselors	23	20	87%	42	32	76%
Total	329	267	81%	598	458	77%

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Table 24 shows the number and type of staff who received training in the needs of diverse learners during each semester. This type of training provides teachers with strategies that are

specifically geared towards the special circumstances of diverse learners such as Limited English Proficient (LEP) and English as a Second Language (ESL) students**.** In Summer 2004, campuses provided training primarily to teachers, to prepare them to provide services early in the grant period. Toward the end of the grant, the smaller training programs were more evenly split between teachers and paraprofessionals. Interestingly, the percentage of reporting campuses that supported Professional Development for Teachers increased from 47% in the 2004 summer program to 58% in the 2005 program, but fewer teachers participated.

Table 24. Staff Who Received Training in the Needs of Diverse Learners during Summer 2004 and Summer 2005.

STAFF	Summer 2004	Summer 2005
Highly Qualified Teachers	655	83
Paraprofessionals or Instructional Assistants	3	60
Counselors	12	10
Total	670	153

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR1 Summer 2004, PPR4 Summer 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

In addition to staff who participated in the grant program, campuses utilized three categories of volunteers to deliver services. The progress report administered at the end of the spring semester (PPR3) asked campuses to describe activities and services provided by parents, mentors, and other volunteers. The 11 project campuses that responded reported that parents not only provided services but received services.

As providers of services, parents helped teachers with tutoring and student learning, assisted with campus events such as fundraisers, and provided non-academic instruction in character building and career exploration. As the recipients of services, parents attended parent nights and training workshops that addressed how to work with the school to improve their child's learning.

Mentors work with students to improve their academic, decision making, and problem solving skills. Students assigned to a mentor are afforded a connection with someone on campus who takes an interest in them. The 18 campuses that responded to the item reported that mentors

consisted of staff, parents and members of the community. They provided tutoring and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test preparation, took students on fieldtrips, provided support, guidance, and advice as well as career and job counseling.

Finally, 10 campuses reported that volunteers other than parents and mentors participated in the TXDPG. Student volunteers engaged in activities that included clerical duties and assisting at functions while volunteers from the community provided life skill classes, career counseling and assisted with tutoring.

Summary of Summer Programs

The first term of the grant period, Summer 2004, saw the fewest campuses offering services and the fewest overall students served. During both summer school programs, grantee campuses primarily directed TXDPG funds towards Credit Recovery activities and Professional Development for Teachers. The popularity of Credit Recovery is bolstered by the large number of students who participated in these programs. About half of the reporting grantee campuses supported Professional Development for Teachers during each summer term. The final term of the grant, Summer 2005, had the least variety of activities and services offered. The most frequently dropped activities from the earlier terms were College and Career Planning and Mentoring services. Presumably, the grantee campuses felt that these activities were less effective than credit accrual, however, it is possible that campuses encountered problems with sustaining these services and directed efforts elsewhere.

MOST AND LEAST EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES AS REPORTED BY CAMPUSES

The progress report administered at the end of Summer 2005 (PPR4) asked campuses to review the goals of the TXDPG program and identify the activities/strategies they believed were most and least effective in reaching those goals. The two primary goals of the TXDPG program were to:

- Increase the number of students who graduate from high school, and
- Proactively address the underlying factors that cause some students to drop out of school prior to receiving a high school diploma.

Table 25 shows the strategies and activities reported as most effective by project campuses. Over one-third of reporting campuses identified tutoring/homework help and software (in particular, PLATO labs) as the most effective. Plato software is primarily used in accelerated credit accrual programs to help students make up missing credits at their own pace. Summer school programs and credit recovery classes were marked as effective by more than 15% of grantees. Although tutoring is widely identified as an effective measure, note that tutoring was supported with TXDPG funds by only half of grantees during the spring term, and by only one-sixth of campuses that had summer terms in 2005. Tutoring clearly has a perceived usefulness, so the reduction in tutoring may be due to a shortage of qualified tutors. Alternatively, tutoring may continue to occur at campuses, thus the high rates of perceived effectiveness, but funding for tutoring may be supplemented by other grant money the campus receives.

**Table 25. Strategies and Activities Identified by Project Campuses
as Most Effective in Reaching Goals of the Grant Program**

Strategy or Activity	Number of Responses	Percentage of Campuses
Tutoring and Homework Help	20	43%
Software (Plato Labs)	17	36%
Summer School	9	19%
Credit Recovery classes	8	17%
Professional Development	5	11%
Summer program – smaller enrollment	5	11%
Dropout Prevention Counselor	5	11%
Other	3	6%
Mentoring	3	6%
Services for Pregnant/Parenting Students	3	6%
Home Visits	2	4%
Accelerated Instruction	2	4%
Total Number of Activities & Strategies Identified*	82	

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M University, 2006.

Note: * Based on responses from 47 campuses.

Table 26 shows the strategies and activities that project campuses named as least effective in achieving the goals of the TXDPG program. The largest percentages of campuses identified Plato Labs (33%) and Summer School (20%) as being least effective. The fact that Plato Labs were identified by some campuses as most effective and by other campuses as least effective suggests that its effectiveness may be strongly influenced by barriers or difficulties in implementation faced by some grantees but not by others. When given the opportunity to describe problems and difficulties faced in implementing different strategies, grantees identified the short duration of summer school as a hindrance in helping students acquire needed credits. Thus, "ineffective" strategies may have been interpreted by grantees as "problematic" or "difficult to implement" rather than truly ineffective if high levels of implementation had been achieved.

**Table 26. Strategies and Activities Identified by Project Campuses
as Least Effective in Reaching Goals of the Grant Program**

Strategy or Activity	Number of Responses*	Percentage of Total
Plato Labs	15	33%
Limits of Summer School (short duration and scheduling issues)	9	20%
Use of Independent/Individual Consultants	5	11%
Parental Involvement	5	11%
Other	5	11%
Mentoring program	3	7%
Computer software	2	4%
Ninth Grade Success Initiative (NGSI)	2	4%
Total Number of Activities & Strategies Identified	46	

Source: Project Progress Reports: PPR2 Fall 2004, PPR3 Spring 2005; The Evaluation Group at Texas A&M
             University, 2006.

Note: * Based on responses from 46 campuses.

CONCLUSIONS

The emphasis on Credit Recovery and Computer-Aided Instruction suggests that project campuses focused on providing direct services that address the first goal of the TXDPG program, to increase the number of students that graduate from high school. To provide students with ample time to complete coursework and make up credits, they also supported Expanded Learning Opportunities. To ensure that grant services were delivered by highly trained staff, campuses supported the hiring of staff and Professional Development. Even during the last summer of the grant, more campuses supported these activities, indicating the high value placed on high quality instructors.

In comparison, project campuses did not appear to emphasize the indirect services that address the second goal of the grant: to proactively address the underlying factors that cause some students to drop out of school prior to receiving a high school diploma. Few campuses supported activities such as services for Pregnant/Parenting Students, Service Learning opportunities, or Work Study.

Some activities that by all accounts are important in addressing student dropout were notably less broadly implemented toward the conclusion of the grant. Tutoring and guidance/support activities, such as Mentoring, decreased dramatically toward the end of the grant These two activities are widely cited as effective strategies in the literature on dropout prevention, so it is of concern that these activities were not sustained throughout the four semesters of the TXDPG program. A possible explanation is that sustaining a pool of qualified tutors and mentors to provide one-on-one assistance to students is too labor intensive for many campuses to maintain. The same trend occurred for the expansion of the NGSI, which was only supported by a few campuses and all but eliminated by the end of Summer 2005.

In general, projects began slowly; the first term of the project year, Summer 2004, saw the fewest number of students served. Delivery of TXDPG-funded services seemed to peak during the Spring 2005 term as greater numbers of students were served and staff were funded. Summer programs provided far fewer students with grant-funded services, but allowed targeted students the opportunity to recover needed credits.

To best utilize the relatively short duration of a grant period, it would be beneficial to be able to sustain maximum implementation throughout the project. It is therefore recommended that collaboration among campuses on the successful use of strategies and activities be encouraged.

In the absence of an evaluation of student outcomes, the most and least effective activities reported by project campuses provided a glimpse of effectiveness as perceived by those directly involved in administering the program. The activities identified as most effective support the finding that campuses funded activities that directly address the goals of the grant. Tutoring and homework help are direct one-on-one services aimed at helping students academically. Similarly, the software used in credit recovery labs gives students the opportunity to acquire missing credits.

Plato software and summer school were listed as being both the most and the least effective activities allowable under the TXDPG program. The fact that several of the same activities named as effective were also named as least effective point to issues of implementation. These

difficulties suggest the need for further investigation in this area and perhaps assistance to campuses that are implementing these activities for the first time.

REFERENCES

Aldeman, C. (1999). *Answers in the tool box: Academic intensity, attendance patterns, and bachelor's degree attainment*. Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Improvement.

Black, S. (2002). Keeping kids from dropping out. *American School Board Journal,* 189, 50-52.

Cabrera, A., Prabhu, R., & Deli-Amen, R. (2003). *Increasing the college preparedness of at-risk students*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

Christenson, S. L. & Thurlow, M. L. (2004). School Dropouts: Prevention consideration, interventions, and challenges. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 1*(13), 36-39.

Christenson, S. L., Sinclair, M. F., Lehr, C. A., & Godber, Y. (2001). Promoting successful school completion: Critical conceptual and methodological guidelines. *School Psychology Quarterly,* 16(4), 468-484.

Dynarski, M. & Gleason, P. (2002). How can we help? What we have learned from recent federal dropout prevention evaluations. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk,* 7(1), 43-69.

Fashola, O. S. & Slavin, R. E. (1998). Effective dropout prevention and college attendance programs for students placed at risk. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 3(2), 159-184.

Finn, J. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of educational research,* 59, 117-142.

Hess, G. A., Jr., Well, E., Prindle, C., Liffman, P., & Kaplan B. (1987). Where's Room 185? How schools can reduce their dropout problem. *Education and Urban Society, 19*(3), 330-355.

Jobs for the Future. (2004, June). The dropout crisis: Promising approaches in prevention and recovery. Boston, MA: Author.

Lehr, C. A., Hanson, A., Sinclair, M. F., & Christenson, S. L. (2003). Moving beyond dropout toward prevention towards school completion: An integrative review of data-based interventions. *School Psychology Review,* 32, 342-364.

Lehr, C. A., Johnson, D. R., Bremer, C. D., Cosio, A., & Thompson, M. (2004) *Increasing rates of school completion: Moving from policy and research to practice.* Minneapolis, MN: National Center on Secondary Education and Transition.

Lever, N., Sander, M. A., Lombardo, S., Randall, C., Axelrod, J., Rubenstein, M., Weist, M. D. (2004). *Behavior Modification, 28*(4), 513-527.

Martinez, M. & Klopott, S. (2004). *How is school reform tied to increasing college access and success for low-income and minority youth?* Boston, MA: Pathways to College Network.

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. (2004, March). *Effective strategies*. Clemson, SC: Clemson University.

Olson, L. (2006, June 22). The down staircase. *Education Week, 25*(41S), 5-6, 10-11.

Pathways to College Network. (November, 2002). *A shared agenda: A leadership challenge to improve college access and success*. Boston, MA: The Education Resources Institute.

Principals' Partnership (2006). *Research brief: Dropout rate*. Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.principalspartnerhsip.com/

Redd, Z., Brooks, J., & McGarvey, A. (2004). *Background for community-level work on educational adjustment, achievement and attainment in adolescence: Reviewing the literature on contributing factors*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

Scharge, F. P., & Smink, J. (2001). *Strategies to help solve our school dropout problem.* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Slavin, R. & Fashola, O. (1998). *Show me the evidence: Proven and promising programs for America's schools.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Southern Regional Educational Board. (2002a). *Reducing dropout rates.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

Southern Regional Educational Board. (2002b). *Student readiness for college: Connecting state policies.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

Southern Regional Educational Board. (2002c). *Summer school: Unfilled promise.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

Texas Center for Education Research. (2002, March). *At-Risk Students and the Transition to High School: Texas' Efforts to Support Ninth Grade Success.* Retrieved August 8, 2006, from http://www.tcer.org/tcer/publications/ninthgrade_final_report.pdf

Texas Education Agency. (2002, November). *2002 Comprehensive annual report on Texas public schools.* Austin, TX: Author.

Texas Education Agency. (2004, July). *Texas Education Agency strategic plan for the fiscal years 2005-2009 period.* Austin, TX: Author.

Texas Education Agency. (2004, August). *Secondary school completion and dropouts in Texas public schools.* Austin, TX: Author.

Texas Education Agency. (2006, August). *Secondary school completion and dropouts in Texas public schools 2004-05* [Electronic version]. Austin, TX: Author.

Texas High School Project (2004). *Texas high school project fact sheet.* Dallas, TX: Community Foundation of Texas.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2004). *Closing the Gaps by 2015.* Austin, TX: Author.

Thornburgh, N. (2006, April 17). Dropout nation. *Time, 167*(17), 30-40.

Viadero, D. (2006, June 22). Signs of early exit for dropouts abound. *Education Week, 25*(41S), 20.

Weist, M., Randall, C. J., & Tashman, N. (2000, October). *Dropout prevention: Expanded school mental health approaches.* Preconference workshop presented at the 12th annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference, Baltimore, MD.

Wood, L. A. (1994). An unintended impact of one grading practice. *Urban Education, 29*(2), 188-201.

Woods, G. (1995). *Reducing the dropout rate.* School Improvement Series. Portland OR: Northwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Woods, E. (2001). Reducing the dropout rate [Electronic version]. School Improvement Series. Portland, OR: Northwest Educational Development Laboratory.