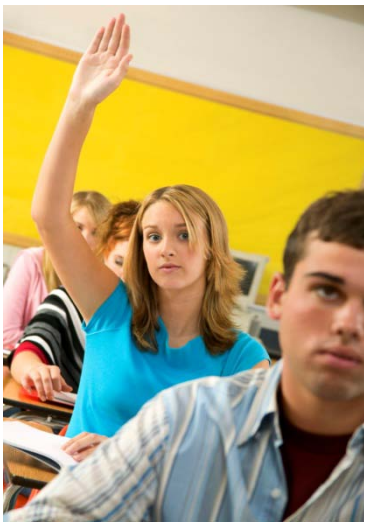

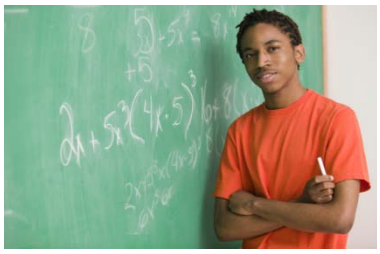

High School Success Pilot Program

Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program

Interim Report #1

December 2010

Submitted to:
Texas Education Agency

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Submitted by:
ICF International

CREDITS

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Executive Summary

This interim evaluation report presents findings from the first year of the evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction pilot program (Collaborative), which corresponds to the 2008-09 school year. The Collaborative is one of three grant programs grouped together as the High School Success Pilot Programs (HSSPP). The other two programs are the Intensive Summer Programs pilot program (ISP) and the Mathematics Instructional Coaches pilot program (MIC). Collectively, these three grant programs were authorized and funded by the Texas Legislature in 2007 so awarded districts could develop and implement projects to prevent and reduce dropout, increase high school success, and improve college and career readiness in public schools.

The consequences of a student's decision to drop out of school can have serious and negative ramifications for both the individual and society as a whole. Texas has taken a number of steps to reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation rates and college and career readiness, and involve multiple stakeholders in these efforts. Just as the decision to drop out is influenced by multiple and interrelated personal, demographic, social, and school-based factors, the Collaborative grant program was designed to be multi-faceted and involve cooperation among schools, individuals, and organizations from outside of the traditional school community to provide effective interventions and services to students at risk of dropping out of school.

Program Goals

The Collaborative was designed to provide grantees opportunities to create a new local dropout reduction program or to expand/enhance an existing program.[1] The purpose of the Collaborative is to foster collaborations with local businesses, other local governments or law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education to deliver proven, research-based dropout intervention services.

> ***"I believe this program is great for kids like myself who only need a little push to continue successfully in life."***
>
> -Collaborative Student

The specific goals of the Collaborative include:

- Increasing the number of students graduating from high school;
- Reducing the number of students who drop out of school in the community;
- Increasing students' job skills;
- Increasing students' employment opportunities;
- Providing continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school, including dropout recovery and re-entry programs;
- Preparing students to graduate college-ready;
- Sustaining dropout reduction and recovery strategies beyond the grant program; and
- Providing models of effective community-based dropout prevention and recovery efforts to serve as guides in developing future program and policy initiatives in the areas of dropout prevention and serving at risk students.

Program Evaluation

TEA contracted with ICF International to conduct an evaluation of the Collaborative program. The comprehensive evaluation approach was designed to address the following objectives:

[1] For more information about the Collaborative, please visit TEA's website for the program at: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3690.

- Evaluate the implementation of Collaborative instructional strategies and programs.
- Evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program on student outcomes.
- Evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program on students' career readiness skills (e.g., ethical workplace behaviors).
- Assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative program.

The evaluation began in September 2008 and is scheduled to end in April 2011. Major deliverables of this evaluation include this interim evaluation report and a second evaluation report scheduled for delivery to the Texas Legislature in January 2011.

> ***"This is a very good program because it's a second opportunity for students."***
>
> -Collaborative Student

This interim evaluation report is designed to provide a detailed accounting of evaluation findings during the 2008-09 school year for Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees, the first year of implementation. This report also provides a preliminary overview of proposed implementation activities for Cycle 2 Collaborative grantees, which began in the 2009-10 school year. Although some outcome data are not available at the time of this writing (e.g., dropout, graduation, promotion, and course completion rates), the report nonetheless provides preliminary evidence for the Collaborative program and sets the stage for Interim Report #2. Interim Report #2, which will be released in January 2011, will include data from the 2009-10 school year. It will provide a more complete picture of the implementation, impact, and cost effectiveness/sustainability of Cycle 1 grantees; and a "full picture" of implementation, but only a "partial picture" of impact and cost effectiveness/sustainability of Cycle 2 grantees.

Grantees

Although there were six Collaborative grantees funded in Cycle 1, only five grantees that served 13 campuses were covered in Year 1 findings. One grantee was impacted by a natural disaster and did not implement the program with fidelity in the 2008-09 school year.[2]

Cycle 1 grantees were located in three general areas of the state:

- Brownsville (Brownsville Independent School District [ISD] and Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District [CISD])
- San Antonio (School of Excellence in Education and Edgewood ISD)
- Houston (Houston ISD).

In addition, there were 16 Cycle 2 grantees located in 31 campuses across the state that implemented the Collaborative grant. This cohort included the following grantee districts: Austin ISD, Carrizo Springs CISD, Corsicana ISD, Dallas ISD, Dallas Can! Academy Charter, Del Valle ISD, Everman ISD, George Gervin Academy Charter School, Harlandale ISD, McAllen ISD, Palestine ISD, Pasadena ISD, Plainview ISD, San Antonio ISD, Snyder ISD, and Spring Branch ISD.

Collaborative grantees offered a diverse set of services to student participants. As with most dropout prevention programs, Collaborative grantees did not focus on a particular service area or strategy; rather, they focused on a large number of risk factors that may influence a student's decision to drop out of school.

[2] Hurricane Ike made landfall on September 13, 2008 and forced the closure of one Collaborative grantee's school system for an extended period of time. The grantee was able to implement their Collaborative program in the spring of 2009, and is expected to continue services in the 2009-10 school year.

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees must address four required service areas:

- *Workforce skill development*, which includes paid employment, internship opportunities, and advanced career and vocational training for participating students.
- *Academic support*, which includes tutoring programs, credit recovery, academic acceleration, active learning strategies, career and technical education, and software to enhance student learning.
- *Attendance improvement*, which includes truancy and attendance intervention and incentive programs, school attachment, and positive behavior support.
- *Student and family support*, which includes addressing the social, emotional, and personal needs of students and their families.

Findings from the Implementation Study: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Grantees

The Collaborative grant program was reaching schools with a large population of students at high risk of dropping out. The majority of the student population at the 13 campuses implementing Cycle 1 projects and the 31 campuses implementing Cycle 2 projects was identified as at risk of dropping out (73%) and economically disadvantaged (88%).[3] Compared to statewide averages, most Collaborative schools had higher mobility and dropout rates, as well as a larger proportion of students enrolled in special education.

> ***"Parents are really in contact with the program because they understand how important the program is for their children."***
>
> -Staff Member

Collaborative Cycle 1 grantees made significant accomplishments and faced a number of challenges in the implementation of their programs. Key facilitators and barriers to program implementation were identified, based on interviews with Collaborative program staff and partners:

Facilitators to implementation included:

- *Diversity in programming*: Diversity in the services provided by Collaborative grantees suggests recognition that students had complex, interrelated problems that required multiple interventions. There is rarely a "magic bullet" in turning a child's life around. It is a complex process that requires hard work, and given the fact that every child is different, offering a wide array of services maximizes a program's chances of success.
- *Cultural competence*: Collaborative grantees were working in highly diverse areas with at risk populations. It was evident from the grantee applications and interviews that Collaborative grantees understood the importance of cultural competence,[4] especially as it related to engaging both students and their families in dropout prevention efforts. For example, one grantee engaged in outreach in both Spanish and English to ensure that parents understood the value of the Collaborative program.
- *Good communication*: Case study findings suggested that solid relationships and regular communication between collaborative partners, school staff, and the district facilitated program implementation. All Cycle 1 grantees mentioned that clear and effective communication strategies were established and maintained during the first year of programming.

[3] In order to be classified by TEA as at risk for dropping out, a student must meet one of 13 criteria (e.g., homeless, pregnant). A full definition of at risk can be found at: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2009/glossary.html.

[4] Cultural competence refers to the ability to effectively interact with people of different cultures.

Barriers to implementation included:

- *Coordination of a large number of partners*: Given that the average Collaborative grantee had 5.6 outside partnerships, tracking those partnerships and coordinating services proved to be a challenge in some cases. For example, one grant coordinator reported feeling stretched thin in providing services from a number of partners across a number of sites.
- *Parent participation*: Some grantees reported that parents of participating students were not supportive of the Collaborative program. In multiple grantee locations, parents were reported to lack understanding of how specific Collaborative initiatives would help their children (e.g., providing students with the opportunity to attend college). To overcome this barrier, grantees invited parents to attend seminars, workshops, and college and/or career fairs.
- *Poor economic conditions*: Collaborative grantees had to scale back their implementation of paid jobs programs due to poor economic conditions. Because many of the skills that Collaborative students need to be college and career ready depended upon hands-on experience, it may have been more challenging for grantees to show positive effects in areas such as ethical workplace behaviors, technological knowledge, and leadership skills.
- *Natural disasters*: Houston and Port Arthur were impacted by Hurricane Ike. Both districts got off to a slower start than anticipated because schools were closed for two weeks in Houston and four weeks in Port Arthur at the beginning of the 2008-09 school year. Houston was able to begin implementation shortly after schools were open, while Port Arthur experienced a much longer delay in program implementation (and has been excluded from this report on 2008-09 activities).

> ***"I am very thankful about having joined Collaborative. It has given me a lot of helpful information about what to do for myself and get ready for college."***
>
> -Collaborative Student

Findings from Student Outcome Analyses: Cycle 1 Grantees

Student participants' scores from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) from the baseline year (2007-08) were compared to scores from the end of the first year of Collaborative implementation (2008-09) for reading, math, and science. Data were available for 424 Collaborative students on TAKS math, 414 students on TAKS reading, and 197 students on TAKS science.[5] Key findings include:

- ***Collaborative students' proficiency in TAKS math significantly improved between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years; however, these improvements only slightly outpaced trends in statewide averages.*** The percentage of Collaborative students who met standards in TAKS math increased 7 percentage points, from 42% in 2007-08 to 49% in 2008-09. The improvements made by Collaborative students in TAKS math slightly outpaced gains by at risk high school students in Texas, who increased TAKS math proficiency by 5 percentage points (i.e., from 44% to 49%) during the same period. Across Texas, high school students reported a 4 percentage point increase in meeting TAKS math standards, from 66% in 2007-08 to 70% in 2008-09.

[5] Altogether, 913 students were served by the Collaborative, so these findings represent less than half of the students served. Valid data were not available in many cases because (a) students took an alternative form of the TAKS, or (b) students did not have valid data for both time points, which may be due to a variety of factors such as being absent on test day, exempt due to LEP status, or if the student moved out of state.

- ***Collaborative students' proficiency on TAKS reading was slightly higher between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, but these gains mirrored statewide trends***. The percentage of Collaborative students who met standards in TAKS reading increased from 73% in 2007-08 to 76% in 2008-09. This increase of 3 percentage points was marginally significant (p<.10); however, at risk high school students across Texas also achieved a 3 percentage point improvement in TAKS reading proficiency over the same period (i.e., from 77% to 80%). The statewide average of high school students meeting TAKS standards also increased by 3 percentage points, from 86% in 2007-08 to 89% in 2008-09.

> ***"Some kids are pushing other students to participate. Before, students didn't have the self-esteem or the communications skills to do this."***
>
> -Project Director

- ***Collaborative students' proficiency in TAKS science significantly improved between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, and these improvements outpaced statewide trends among both high school students overall and at risk high school students.*** The percentage of Collaborative students who met standards in TAKS science increased from 32% in 2007-08 to 57% in 2008-09. This increase of 26 percentage points among Collaborative students was significantly higher than the 5 percentage point increase in TAKS science proficiency among at risk students in Texas. The percentage of at risk high school students who met standards in TAKS science increased from 52% in 2007-08 to 57% in 2008-09. Likewise, gains among Collaborative students in TAKS science proficiency also significantly outpaced statewide trends among all high school students. Across Texas, 71% of high school students met standards in TAKS science in 2007-08, increasing by 4 percentage points to 75% in 2008-09.

> ***"Some of the students have families of their own and if we can touch this generation of students, they will be good role models for their kids."***
>
> -Administrator

Collaborative staff at four of the five grantee locations indicated that they had seen noticeable improvements in students' academic performance. Through a number of initiatives designed to improve academic achievement, including cross-age tutoring programs, dual credit courses, flexible scheduling, tutoring, and academic advisory services, Collaborative grantees may have been responsible for these improvements. Grantees attributed their initiatives to improvements in students' grades, more time-on-task as a result of fewer behavioral problems, and exposure to new ways of learning. In particular, grantees' focus on technical education may in part explain the significant improvements in science proficiency. Although our research methods cannot prove that Collaborative initiatives caused improvements in academic performance, there is both qualitative and quantitative support for this finding.

Findings from the Collaborative Student Survey and Stakeholder Survey

A survey was administered to Collaborative students in April 2009 to capture information on perceptions of program effectiveness, future plans, and other outcomes such as stronger technological knowledge, ethical workplace behaviors, increased leadership skills, and improved oral and written communications skills. The ICF team also surveyed 55 stakeholders (e.g., teachers, grant coordinators, principals) about these outcomes during site visits to all five Collaborative grantees in the spring of 2009.

Collaborative students reported that the program was particularly effective in helping them attend class regularly, prepare for college, and learn independently. Moreover, the majority of students (53%) indicated that they plan to attend a 4-year college or university. The majority of the Collaborative stakeholders surveyed also indicated that the program has been "somewhat

successful" or "very successful" in improving students' technological knowledge (66%), ethical workplace behaviors (80%), leadership skills (80%), and oral and written communications skills (75%).

Findings from Cost Analyses

The five Cycle 1 grantees served a total of 913 students during the first nine months of the grant award period (through April 30, 2009) and expended a total of $427,720 during this reporting period, which resulted in an actual program cost per student of $468.

Conclusions and Next Steps for the Collaborative Program

Five of the six Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees implemented their programs as expected in the first year of the program, and preliminary findings indicated that Collaborative students were improving on TAKS math, TAKS reading, and TAKS science. Qualitative findings from Collaborative stakeholders generally supported the presence of positive effects in academic achievement. Moreover, Collaborative stakeholders noted perceiving improvements in students' ethical workplace behaviors, technological knowledge, leadership skills, and oral and written communications skills. Perceptions were generally mixed on whether the Collaborative program was influencing dropout rates, enhancing family support, and improving ethical workplace behaviors. Regardless, there was universal agreement among stakeholders that the Collaborative was making a difference for at risk students.

As additional data become available from both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees, the evaluation team will continue to expand and refine these findings. The availability of school-level TAKS results in the fall of 2009 will allow the evaluation team to complete the quasi-experimental study to determine whether Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees had stronger outcomes over schools within the same district that did not implement the Collaborative. This analysis to be reported in Interim Report #2 will constitute the first rigorous assessment of the program's effects.

1. Introduction

Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts
(Harlow, 2003)

This interim evaluation report presents findings from the first year of the evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction pilot program (Collaborative), which is one of three programs grouped together as the High School Success Pilot Programs (HSSPP). The other two programs are the Intensive Summer Programs pilot program (ISP) and the Mathematics Instructional Coaches pilot program (MIC). Collectively, these three programs were authorized and funded by the Texas Legislature in 2007 so districts could develop and implement programs to prevent and reduce dropout, increase high school success, and improve college and work readiness in public schools.

In addition, the Texas Legislature authorized and funded the evaluation of the HSSPP, which is being conducted by ICF International (ICF) under contract with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The four objectives of the evaluation of the Collaborative are:

- To describe and evaluate the implementation of the Collaborative;
- To evaluate the impact of the Collaborative on student outcomes;
- To evaluate the impact of the Collaborative activities (e.g., employment and internship opportunities for students) on students' career readiness skills; and
- To determine the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative.

The evaluation of the Collaborative is scheduled to continue through August 2011, and a second comprehensive evaluation report that will include additional data on Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Collaborative grantees will be released in January 2011.

The Dropout Problem in the United States

School dropout in the United States (U.S.) has been called a "crisis" or an "epidemic" by various sources who work closely with this issue nationally (Edley, 2004; Powell, 2008). Regardless of the name given to the situation, there is no doubt that dropping out of school is a widespread and serious problem in the U.S., with enormous consequences for students who choose to drop out. Without a diploma, dropouts face increasingly bleak career prospects tied largely to entry-level employment. They also may remain far behind in a technology-driven age where career adaptability is not simply a plus, but a requirement. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), a high school dropout earns an average of $9,000 less per year than a high school graduate. This difference translates into an earnings loss of $260,000 over a lifetime for more than half a million young people who drop out of high school each year. A recent report suggests that the U.S. can regain $45 billion lost in tax revenues, health care expenditures, and social service outlays if the number of high school dropouts were reduced in half (Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse, 2007).

Dropouts cost the public an estimated $24 billion each year in crime, food stamps, housing assistance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

(Riggs, Carruthers, & Thorstensen, 2002)

Many factors contribute to students dropping out of school, including poverty, low literacy and achievement levels, parenting responsibilities, and the need to earn money through employment. According to researchers from the National Center for Education Statistics, only 75% of high school students graduated on time in the 2006-07 school year (Stillwell, 2010). Moreover, only 62% of African-American students and 64% of Hispanic students in the U.S. graduated from high school in four years, which is lower than rates for White (81%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (91%) students. In addition, graduation rates have been found to be lower for males than for females (Stillwell, 2010).

While these rates may differ by demographic characteristics, dropout is nonetheless a universal problem faced by nearly every school in the U.S. Despite an expansion of government resources on K-12 education, dropout rates have changed little during the past 15 years.

The Dropout Problem in Texas

TEA's reported four-year graduation rate for the class of 2007 was 78.0%.[6] Table 1.1 provides a list of student risk factors that may be associated with higher dropout rates, the prevalence of these risk factors as a percentage of student enrollment in the state in 2007-08, and four-year dropout rates for the class of 2008. Texas districts enroll a sizable number of students who are limited English proficient (LEP). In 2007-08, approximately 17% of students had LEP or bilingual status, and 31% of LEP students in the class of 2008 cohort dropped out of school. Approximately 10% of students in Texas were receiving special education services in 2007-08 (TEA, 2008a). While special education students in the class of 2007 had lower dropout rates than LEP students in the same cohort, they nonetheless dropped out at a higher rate (15%) than the state average (11%).

In addition, student enrollment data show that more than half of Texas K-12 students are economically disadvantaged. With this high poverty rate come diverse challenges, both in terms of academic achievement and dropout prevention. Economically disadvantaged students are more likely to drop out of school (16% vs. 11% state average), and addressing the needs of these students is an ongoing concern from the elementary years onward (TEA, 2008a). Students who were at risk experienced similar dropout rates to economically disadvantaged students (17%).

Differential dropout rates among these risk factors provide a possible glimpse into the future, and helps us understand the challenges facing Collaborative grantees. For example, LEP students are more than three times as likely to drop out of school as the average student in the state. Given that the percentage of LEP students in Texas has been growing in recent years (from 14% in 2000-01 to 17% in 2007-08), it stands to reason that this trend will put pressure on dropout rates in the years to come (TEA, 2001, 2008a).

As a result of these trends and challenges, Texas is implementing four key strategies to reach students at risk of dropping out of school. These strategies, which have been developed by drawing on evidence from previous research,[7] include:

- *Data systems to identify struggling students who need early intervention*: These systems are designed to identify students at risk of dropping out, determine their needs, and ensure that appropriate services are provided. For example, TEA has funded the 9th Grade Transition Program, which includes the implementation of an early warning system by each grantee.
- *Learning environments that are challenging and personalized for each student*: Within a personalized learning environment, TEA encourages rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning academic and social skills necessary to become college and career ready. TEA initiatives fostering such learning environments include Early College High Schools, High Schools That Work, the College Readiness Initiative for Middle School Students, and T-STEM Academies.

[6] According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Texas had a four-year graduation rate of 73% in the 2006-07 school year (Stillwell, 2010). Even though Texas' graduation rate had improved from 71% in 2000-01 to 73% in 2006-07, it remained the 35th ranked state during that period. TEA's reported four-year graduation rate for the class of 2007 was 78.0%, which is slightly higher than the rate reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). TEA uses the National Governors Association (NGA) definition of dropout, while NCES has its own definition. Although the formula used by TEA and NCES to calculate four-year graduation rates is similar, TEA tracks graduation on an individual level, while NCES uses data from the Common Core of Data (CCD), which is aggregated to the school level.

[7] For additional information on these strategies, please see http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147483783&menu_id=2147483659

- *Mentors who are used as role models and advocates for students*: Mentors can help students address academic, social, and emotional needs that are barriers to academic achievement. The Collaborative encourages social supports for students through mentoring. Other TEA initiatives with a mentoring component include Amachi Mentoring, Communities In Schools, and Texas GEAR UP.
- *Academic support to students who are behind in school*: Providing targeted academic support can help address skill gaps and enrich the learning environment for students who are off track. TEA sponsors academic support through the Collaborative, as well as 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the Investment Capital Fund, the Limited English Proficient Student Success Initiative, and the Optional Extended Year Program, among others.

Although dropout remains a challenge in Texas – and especially for some groups of students –TEA has funded a number of initiatives (including the Collaborative) that employ evidence-based strategies to support students who are most at risk of dropping out of school.

Table 1.1: Texas K-12 Enrollment (2007-08) and Four-Year Dropout Rate (Class of 2008), by Risk Factor

Risk Factor	Enrollment	Four-Year Dropout Rate
Special education	10.0%	14.5%
Economically disadvantaged	55.3%	15.7%
LEP	16.7%	30.8%
At risk students*	48.4%	16.7%
State Average		**10.5%**

Source: TEA, Division of Performance Reporting, Academic Excellence Indicator System 2007-08 State Performance Report
* At risk" is defined by TEA as students who exhibit at least one of 13 risk factors. A complete listing of these risk factors can be found at: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2007/glossary.html#atrisk.

Previous Research on Dropout Reduction and Prevention Programs

Schools across the country are implementing a variety of strategies to reach students at risk of dropping out of school. These strategies include mentoring and monitoring students, utilizing alternative high schools, and reorganizing schools into smaller "learning communities" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008). By mentoring and monitoring students, large urban high schools are able to keep track of at risk youth and identify community services that may help students stay in school and reach graduation. Alternative high schools allow students to earn their diplomas in a small school setting with a focus on vocational training and real-world experiences. Schoolwide reorganization involves a system level change where schools are restructured into smaller learning communities, often by grade level, and a new curriculum is introduced with higher academic standards to better prepare students for college (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008).

Research on successful dropout prevention strategies has become more plentiful in recent years, and several efforts have been undertaken nationwide to help practitioners identify best practices in dropout prevention – including TEA's commission of a study on Best Practices in Dropout Prevention in 2008. Table 1.2 presents evidence-based strategies that were identified in at least

two of the six sources of "best practices" that were reviewed. Results are organized by level of implementation (i.e., state/district, school, and student) and then by number of sources reporting this practice as evidence-based. Within each level, themes are listed in descending order of number of sources, so that themes common to the most sources are presented first. Keys to level and source codes are displayed below the table.

Table 1.2: Common Strategies Recommended to Address Dropout

Level	Strategy	Sources	Number of Sources
State/District	Multiple approaches/All dropouts are different	A,B,C	**3**
	Data-based decision making	A,B,F	**3**
	Technical assistance to schools and districts	C,F	**2**
School	Staff beliefs/school environment for change	A,B,C,D	**4**
	Make students want to stay in school – do not punish them (including grade retention)	A,B,C,D	**4**
	Family involvement/outreach	A,C,D,E	**4**
	Community collaboration/involvement	A,C,E	**3**
Student	Mentoring/adult advocates	B,C,D,E	**4**
	Academic support/enrichment/tutoring	A,B,D,E	**4**
	Behavior/social skills	A,B,E	**3**
	Personalize the learning environment	B,D	**2**
	Attendance monitoring	A,E	**2**

Note: **A**=Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007; **B**=Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008; **C**=ICF International and the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2008; **D**=Arizona Department of Education, n.d.; **E**=What Works Clearinghouse, 2008; **F**=Bounds, Martez Hill, & Smith, 2007.

Several of these "best practices" strategies are being implemented as part of the Collaborative, as TEA has recognized the importance of including multiple strategies to address dropout through this program. Specifically, community collaboration/involvement, which is the basis of the Collaborative, was listed in three of these sources as a strategy for addressing the dropout problem. Strong partnerships between the school and community are fostered by sharing resources and expertise, as well as working together to design a program that meets the needs of students (Coalition for Community Schools, n.d.). Community partnerships are valuable to schools because they provide students access to social services, create unique learning opportunities, and promote opportunities for students to develop new relationships (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006).

Both TEA and Texas state lawmakers have taken a strong interest in dropouts for more than two decades. From the passage of House Bill (H.B.) 72 in 1984 to the recent passage of H.B. 2237 in 2007 (which was further funded in 2009), it is evident that the Texas Legislature has been consistent in its interest in dropout prevention, and this evaluation report offers an indication of whether one initiative, the Collaborative, is helping – or will help – the dropout concern in Texas.

Overview of Report

This interim evaluation report provides a summary of evaluation findings to date, and a preliminary review of the Cycle 2 Collaborative programs. Even though some outcome data are still forthcoming, the report nonetheless provides preliminary findings for the Cycle 1 grantees and sets the stage for the second phase of the evaluation, which will include both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees.

In the next chapter, an overview of the Collaborative is presented. Following, Chapter 3 presents the evaluation approach used to assess the implementation of the Collaborative and the impact of the Collaborative on student outcomes. It also presents the approach used to evaluate the cost and sustainability of the Collaborative. Chapters 4–8 present the results of the evaluation. Specifically, Chapter 4 describes the implementation of the Collaborative by Cycle 1 grantees. Chapter 5

describes the planned implementation of the Collaborative by Cycle 2 grantees. Chapter 6 includes the findings on the effectiveness of the Collaborative on student outcomes, and Chapter 7 presents the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative. Chapter 8 presents the discussion of Collaborative findings and next steps in the evaluation.

2. Overview of the Collaborative

This section provides a description of the Collaborative program, which was funded in the 80th Texas Legislature under H.B. 2237 §29.096.[8] A description of the key components of the program is included in Table 2.1. A draft program logic model, illustrating the sequence of actions that describe what the Collaborative is and will do and how these components may link to program outcomes, is located in Appendix A.

Table 2.1: Overview of Various Components of the Collaborative[9]

Program Component	Collaborative
Short Description	Strategies are provided for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities, for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school
Project Period Cycle 1	08/01/08-02/29/12 (43 months)
Number of Grantees Cycle 1	6[10]
Total Cycle 1 Funding (total Project Period)	$2,718,936
Project Period Cycle 2	04/01/09-02/28/11 (22 months)
Number of Grantees Cycle 2	16
Total Cycle 2 Funding (total Project Period)	$3,866,098
Targeted Grade Levels/School Types	9-12 (any combination)
Key Grantee Partners	Community Agencies, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and Businesses
Maximum Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Award Amount per Grantee (total Project Period)	$250,000 max
Matching Funds Required for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Grantees (total Project Period)	Yes (by partners) (10% of grant request)

Source: Collaborative Grant Request for Application (RFA), 2007 and 2008 (Texas Education Agency, 2008b, 2008c)

[8] More information about the Collaborative can be found on TEA's website: http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3690.

[9] Rider 53(b) of H.B. 2237 added continuation funding for Cycle 1 grantees, and funded a third cycle of Collaborative grantees, which will not be the subject of this evaluation.

[10] One grantee did not implement the program with fidelity in the 2008-09 school year. Hurricane Ike, which made landfall on September 13, 2008, foced the closure of the grantee's school system for an extended period of time.

Background/Situation

The consequences of a student's decision to drop out of school have serious and negative ramifications for both the individual and society as a whole. Texas has taken a number of steps to reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation rates and postsecondary readiness, and involve multiple stakeholders in these efforts. Just as the decision to drop out is influenced by multiple and interrelated personal, demographic, social, and school-based factors, the Collaborative is designed to be multi-faceted and involve cooperation among schools and individuals and organizations from outside of the traditional school community to provide effective interventions and services to students at risk of dropping out of school.

Program Goals

The Collaborative was designed to provide grantees opportunities to create a new local collaborative dropout reduction program or to expand/enhance an existing program. The purpose of the Collaborative is to foster collaborations with local businesses, other local governments or law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education to deliver proven, research-based dropout intervention services.

The specific goals of the Collaborative include:

- Increasing the number of students graduating from high school;
- Reducing the number of students who drop out of school in the community;
- Increasing students' job skills;
- Increasing students' employment opportunities;
- Providing continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school, including dropout recovery and re-entry programs;
- Preparing students to graduate college-ready;
- Sustaining dropout reduction and recovery strategies beyond the grant program; and
- Providing models of effective community-based dropout prevention and recovery efforts to serve as guides in developing future program and policy initiatives in the areas of dropout prevention and serving at risk students.

Project Period

The project period for the Cycle 1 grant projects is August 1, 2008 to February 29, 2012 (43 months) and Cycle 2 is funded from April 1, 2009 to February 28, 2011 (22 months). Allocated funding for Cycle 1 grantees for the entire project period is $2.7 million and allocated funding for Cycle 2 grantees is $3.9 million. The maximum award amount per grantee in both cycles set at $250,000. In addition, 10% of the amount requested through the Collaborative grant in matching funds must be provided for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees by the project partners. Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees were able to begin program implementation as soon as the action plan and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were approved by the TEA, and had the option to choose to have a planning period prior to implementing their project. TEA has allocated $1.2 million for a third cycle of Collaborative grantees; however, these grantees will not be covered under this evaluation.

Eligible Districts and Open Enrollment Charter Schools

Eligible school districts or open enrollment charter schools for Cycle 1 include those that have 75% or more of their students who are enrolled in the district identified as being economically disadvantaged, and at least 50% of the students served in the program must be identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. The eligibility requirements were changed for Cycle 2, and eligible districts had to have a student population that was 55% or more economically disadvantaged, or have a dropout rate that placed the district in the top 10% of dropout rates in its comparable size category. In addition, eligible school districts or open enrollment charter schools from both cycles must be financially stable, and charter schools must have active charters. Eligible districts may form shared services agreements (SSAs) with other eligible districts in order to apply for grant funds and implement a collaborative arrangement including multiple districts within a shared geographical region, but an eligible SSA may include no more than ten eligible districts.

Program Requirements and Approved Program Activities

Collaborative projects must provide a variety of services using research-based strategies for at least 20 students[11] in high school (Grades 9-12) in all of the following four service areas:

- *Workforce Skill Development* – Collaborative projects must facilitate paid employment, internship opportunities, and advanced career and vocational training for participating students (e.g., cooperative education programs, school-based enterprises, internships and apprenticeships, job shadowing opportunities, mentoring, and career guidance) with at least one local business, as well as other employers.
- *Academic Support* – Collaborative projects must provide academic services to students, including tutoring programs, course recovery and reentry, academic acceleration, active learning strategies, career and technical education, individualized instruction, educational technology, and software to enhance student learning.
- *Attendance Improvement* – Collaborative projects must provide interventions to improve student attendance. Activities may include truancy and attendance intervention and incentive programs, activities designed to foster student engagement and school attachment, positive behavior support, and other activities designed to increase school attendance and reduce truancy and tardiness.
- *Student and Family Support Services* – Collaborative projects must provide social service interventions to students that address social, emotional, and personal student needs including health issues, emotional and mental health needs, family concerns, substance abuse, involvement with the juvenile justice system, and other issues that may prevent or hinder student academic performance and success.

The four required service areas focus the Collaborative projects on some of the most common needs among at risk students. Collaborative grantees may implement activities within the four service areas using a variety of research-based strategies that best address the needs of local students and communities.

Collaborative grantees are required to designate a lead educational staff member (coordinator) to conduct outreach activities designed to identify and involve eligible students as well as public and private entities to participate in the program. This position may be a full-time or part-time position in a paid or volunteer capacity at the district's discretion, as long as the coordinator can complete the necessary recruitment and coordination efforts.

[11] Students must be authorized to participate by a parent or other person standing in parental relationship.

Approved Use of Funds

Collaborative grantee funds must be expended on programs that support the improvement of high school graduation rates and postsecondary readiness. Collaborative grantees may use grant funds to:

- Provide additional services for students or their families by public or private entities.
- Encourage local business support of the program by encouraging employees to mentor students and provide other school-related volunteer activities. Matching funds may be used to provide paid time off to local business employees for volunteer activities, including mentoring students and other activities related to encouraging the involvement of parents of students enrolled in the program in both collaborative and school activities.
- Provide for electronic course delivery for participating students for the purposes of credit recovery, acceleration to meet local and state graduation requirements, and the delivery of courses for dual enrollment and college credit. Electronic course delivery can also be used to provide supplementary instruction to increase college and workforce readiness.

Grantees may use up to 5% of the grant award for direct administrative expenses. Funds must be used to supplement (increase the level of services) not supplant (replace) funds from the federal, state, and local sources designated to support similar activities.

Critical Success Factors

In addition to specified program goals, TEA has asked the evaluation team to monitor critical success factors for the Collaborative, which are measurable characteristics (supported by research) believed to be critical to obtaining program goals/outcomes. These indicators enable TEA to determine whether grantees are on track to successfully achieve the goals specified for the Collaborative.

- All participating students have Personal Graduation Plans (PGPs) that reflect the rigor of the recommended plan.
- Students are participating in credit recovery programs and are recovering credit sufficient for graduation.
- Students are receiving academic support services.
- Students are receiving attendance support services.
- Students are receiving student and family support services.
- The school attendance, grades and behavior of participating students are improving.
- Students are participating in workforce training, job shadowing, employment internships and other job skill activities.

Summary

The Collaborative was being implemented to address the high dropout rate in Texas schools. Districts and open enrollment charter schools eligible for Cycle 1 Collaborative grants must have had at least 75% of students enrolled identified as being economically disadvantaged and at least 50% of students served identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. The eligibility requirements were changed for Cycle 2, and eligible districts had to have a student population that was 55% or more economically disadvantaged, or have a dropout rate that placed the district in the top 10% of dropout rates in its comparable size category. In addition, eligible school districts or open enrollment charter schools from both cycles must be financially stable, and charter schools must have active charters.

The five grantees that were awarded Cycle 1 grants had the option to create a new program or to expand/enhance an existing program through which the they collaborated with local community partners to reduce the number of students who drop out of school, increase their job skills and employment opportunities, and provide continuing education opportunities. Collaborative grantees worked to accomplish these goals through four required activity areas: workforce skill development, academic support, attendance improvement, and student and family support services. Approved activities were broadly defined so that grantees could provide additional services to students and their families, and grantees were specifically encouraged to engage in partnerships with local businesses to mentor students, as well as provide electronic course delivery.

3. Methodology

TEA contracted with ICF to conduct an evaluation of the Collaborative. The comprehensive evaluation approach was designed to address the following four objectives:

- Evaluate the implementation of the Collaborative instructional strategies and programs.
- Evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program on student outcomes.
- Evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program on students' career readiness skills (e.g., ethical workplace behaviors).
- Assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative.

Evaluation Approach

The evaluation began in September 2008, and is scheduled to end in April 2011. Major deliverables of this evaluation include an interim evaluation report and a final evaluation report.

This interim evaluation report is designed to provide a detailed accounting of evaluation findings for the 2008-09 school year, and a preliminary grants review of the Cycle 2 Collaborative programs. Although some outcome data were not available at the time of this writing (e.g., dropout, graduation, promotion, and course completion rates), the report nonetheless provides preliminary evidence for the grant program and sets the stage for the second phase of the evaluation, which will include a new cycle of grantees and the collection/reporting of key outcome data. Interim Report #2 for the Collaborative, which will be released in January 2011, will include a "full picture" of the implementation, impact, and cost effectiveness/sustainability of Cycle 1 grantees; and a "full picture" of implementation, but only a "partial picture" of impact and cost effectiveness/sustainability of Cycle 2 grantees.

Research Design

The ICF evaluation team is employing a design in the evaluation of the Collaborative program that uses both quantitative and qualitative data to construct a comprehensive picture of the Collaborative program. Data sources include extant data that provided demographic, programmatic, and achievement information and new data collection from key Collaborative stakeholders through interviews and surveys. Together, these data sources allow for the synthesis of results across the Collaborative programs and among Collaborative participants and stakeholders.

Research Questions

Research questions were developed to address each of the four evaluation objectives outlined by TEA. Table 3.1 presents the evaluation objectives and their associated research questions.

Table 3.1: Collaborative Evaluation – Matrix of Evaluation Objectives and Research Questions*

Evaluation Objectives	Research Questions
1. To describe and evaluate the implementation of the Collaborative instructional strategies and programs	What are the characteristics of schools served through the Collaborative program?
	What are the demographic characteristics of students served through the Collaborative program?
	In 2008-09, how did schools/ campuses implement the Collaborative program? Who are the partners? What are the roles and responsibilities of those involved? What types of activities were part of the program?
	What was the level of student participation (i.e., attendance) at each grade level and overall?
	What are the barriers and facilitators to implementation of the Collaborative program?
2. To evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program on student outcomes	What is the relationship between degree of program implementation and student achievement, *dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores*?
	How are dropout prevention strategies related to student achievement, *dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores*?
	How do continuing education opportunities affect student achievement, *dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores*?
	To what extent does student level of participation in the program affect student achievement, *dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores*?
3. To evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program activities (e.g., employment and internship opportunities for students) on students' career readiness skills.	What types of activities were conducted to impact student career readiness skills?
	What are the perspectives of stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, administrators) regarding the impact of program activities on technological knowledge, ethical workplace conduct, effective leadership, and oral and written communication skills?
	What is the relationship between the degree of program implementation, student achievement outcomes (degree of implementation, student achievement markers, and perceptions of student career readiness skills), and perceptions of career readiness skills?
4. To determine the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative program.	How were the grant funds allocated?
	What are the factors contributing to and prohibiting the ongoing sustainability of the Collaborative program?
	How does the Collaborative program implementation cost per student compare to program outcomes? How do these savings differ from alternative programs (e.g., cost to prevent a student from dropping out of school, cost of recovering a student who has dropped out of school)?
	What practices/ models are successful at grantee campuses?

* Due to limitations in the availability of data at the time this report was developed, not all research questions will be answered in this report. Portions of the research questions that will not be answered in this report are italicized. Specifically, dropout, graduation, promotion, course completion, and SAT/ACT outcomes were not available for this report, but will be addressed in Interim Report #2.

Data Sources

This program evaluation relies upon extant data (i.e., existing data and information made available by TEA for this evaluation) and new data collection.

Extant Data

Extant data were obtained from the following sources for the evaluation of Cycle 1 grantees. Data obtained for the evaluation of Cycle 2 grantees will be indicated as appropriate.

- *Collaborative Grant Applications* (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2). Applications for the Collaborative grants were collected by TEA. The applications provided valuable information pertaining to program needs, objectives (e.g., types of students targeted for participation), and proposed services and activities (e.g., workforce development, academic support services). These

documents also provided information about the planned budgetary expenses for each program.

- *Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)* (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2). AEIS provides longitudinal data on every public school and school district in Texas. Campus-level data from AEIS were used to match participating Collaborative schools with non-participating schools on certain school level variables (i.e., percent of students eligible for free/reduced lunch, percent of students at risk, total enrollment in the school, and locality). The AEIS provides data that enables researchers to compare schools that participated in Collaborative program with schools that did not participate in the program. Results from this quasi-experimental study will be available in the Interim Report #2, which is expected to be released in January 2011.
- *Public Education Information Management Systems (PEIMS)* (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2). PEIMS contains longitudinal data on all public school students in the state of Texas, including data in the following areas: demographics, academic performance, behavioral indicators, and attendance. This student level demographic data from PEIMS was used in student-level outcome analyses (i.e., hierarchical linear models, which are presented in Appendix J) to examine the relationship between student characteristics and student outcomes.
- *Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)* (Cycle 1). TAKS is used to measure student achievement among students in Grades 3 through 11 in areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. TAKS was the only student outcome available at the time of this report for the 2008-09 school year and as such was used to measure the extent to which the Collaborative program impacted its students.

New Data Collection

In addition to the extant data described above, new data collection added a number of quantitative and qualitative measures to the evaluation of Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees.

- *Site Visits*. ICF conducted site visits to five Collaborative grantees. These site visits were designed to supplement quantitative data with Collaborative stakeholder perceptions of their program and its effectiveness. Site visits allowed for the collection of in-depth information that provides a more complete picture than quantitative analyses per se, and generally leads to a more multi-faceted understanding of program findings. For further information on the findings from individual Collaborative site visits (i.e., case studies), please see Appendix B.
- *Implementation Interviews*. Members of the evaluation team conducted telephone interviews using a semi-structured interview protocol with Collaborative project coordinators and community partner representatives. The interview protocol consisted of 21 open-ended questions. The items were designed to gather information pertaining to the actual implementation and program activities of the 2008-09 Collaborative programs and their perceived program effectiveness. A copy of the implementation interview protocol is located in Appendix C.
- *Stakeholder Interviews*. The evaluation team conducted on-site interviews of the Collaborative stakeholders (administrators, grant coordinators, community partners, and teachers) at five Collaborative sites. The interview topics were designed to solicit information on the effectiveness of the Collaborative program, quality of the Collaborative partnerships, and sustainability plans for the program. Copies of the stakeholder interview protocols are located in Appendix C.
- *Stakeholder Surveys*. To address specific evaluation questions, surveys were created for grant administrators, project coordinators, community partner representatives, and teachers. All elements of these surveys were constructed and tailored for the purpose of the present evaluation, with a special focus on programmatic outcomes. All of these surveys were paper-based, and were administered prior to stakeholder interviews. Copies of the surveys are included in Appendix D.

- *Student Survey*. This survey provided information about the following topics: background information, demographic information, students' families, neighborhoods, and students' general thoughts on school, behaviors, jobs and future careers. Finally, students were asked to evaluate their experiences in the Collaborative program and assess the program's helpfulness to students. A copy of the student survey is included in Appendix D.
- *Collaborative Grantee Uploads* (Cycle 1). TEA required grantees to report data for each school that implemented the Collaborative program in 2008-09. Data were uploaded by grantees to a central system at TEA. These Collaborative grantee uploads provided information on the following aspects of the Collaborative programs: (1) if students participated in Collaborative activities (i.e., academic preparation, counseling, behavioral support, social services, family services, and career development), (2) the average number of hours students participated in the different Collaborative program activities, and (3) the number of days students were absent from the Collaborative program.

Data Analysis

For the Collaborative interim report, ICF researchers conducted a series of exploratory and descriptive analyses to understand how and why outcomes differed across students and grantees. The findings from quantitative analyses were integrated with qualitative findings and content analyses to generate overall statements about the effectiveness of the Collaborative program, participants' perceptions, and cost/sustainability analyses. Below, each evaluation objective and the analytic methods by which these objectives were addressed are outlined.

Implementation of the Collaborative Programs (Evaluation Objective 1)

The implementation analyses yielded quantitative information on the level of student participation at each grade level. Other data gathered include the types of students enrolled in Collaborative programs, and the kinds of schools that received Collaborative grants. In order to better describe the level and types of implementation, implementation interviews and Collaborative stakeholder interviews were conducted. Content analyses were also conducted on open-ended responses and themes were developed to describe overarching issues facing Collaborative grantees.

Impact of the Collaborative Program on Student Outcomes (Evaluation Objective 2)

The student outcomes analyses examined the Collaborative program's effects from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. From the qualitative perspective, Collaborative stakeholder interviews and the implementation interviews detailed different stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of the Collaborative program, the level of implementation of each program, the level of student participation, the relationship between the Collaborative programs and their community partners, and the type of Collaborative program (e.g., academically-focused, workforce development-focused). These qualitative data were then supplemented with quantitative analyses, including correlational analyses and factor analyses of the measures from stakeholder surveys. Additionally, statistical models were used to learn whether the relationship between the Collaborative program and student academic achievement (i.e., TAKS scores) was significant.

One of the centerpieces of this evaluation is a school-level quasi-experimental study between Collaborative schools and non-Collaborative schools. A quasi-experimental study is a type of research that involves the comparison of the "treatment" group (in this case, Collaborative schools) with a "comparison" group that did not implement the intervention. This allows researchers to

estimate what would have happened in the absence of the treatment. In this case, the evaluation team developed a comparison group of non-Collaborative schools that were matched to Collaborative schools on a number of characteristics. By comparing outcomes between Collaborative and non-Collaborative schools, an estimate of the effects of the Collaborative can be made. Comparison schools were chosen using propensity score matching for 11 of the 15 Cycle 1 Collaborative schools. Details on the propensity score matching procedure (including the variables that were used in the matching process) are presented in Appendix E.

Impact of the Collaborative Programs on Other Relevant Outcomes (Evaluation Objective 3)

Collaborative programs targeted other relevant outcomes, including developing workplace skills among students. Using information from the implementation interviews and the key stakeholder interviews, content analyses revealed the different types of Collaborative program activities and the impact Collaborative programs had on participating students. In particular, the student survey was evaluated to shed additional insights into the following topics: students' future plans, students' self-efficacy measures,[12] positive workplace behaviors, family, and neighborhood measures. Descriptive analyses were used to examine the students' survey responses, in concert with correlational and factor analyses.

Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Collaborative Programs (Evaluation Objective 4)

Using extant data (AEIS, Collaborative grantee applications, and grantee uploads), implementation interviews, and Collaborative stakeholder interviews, the ICF evaluation team was able to analyze the cost breakouts across Collaborative districts and explore how these costs compared to planned expenditures from the Collaborative grants. Additional analyses examined the relationship between program costs and student outcomes, to provide a cost per student figure. Finally, ICF evaluators examined the qualitative survey responses and assessed the sustainability efforts of each program. Prior to the end of the evaluation, the evaluation team will identify key traits of programs that achieved sustainability.

Limitations and Cautions

At this point in the evaluation, several limitations exist in the data, methodology, and findings:

- Most of the data presented in this report involve student-level TAKS results, student survey results, and qualitative data gathered during site visits. At the time of this writing, school-level TAKS data were not available. These data are needed in order to identify an appropriate comparison group, which will allow inferences to be made about the effectiveness of the Collaborative relative to that comparison group. Without this comparison group to assess what would have happened in the absence of the Collaborative, findings presented in this report are largely descriptive in nature.
- It was not feasible to conduct a randomized controlled trial on the Collaborative. Therefore, the ability to clearly attribute findings to the presence of the Collaborative will be limited. This limitation has been addressed, in part through the conduct of a multi-method study, which allows for the triangulation of results from a number of quantitative and qualitative analyses.

[12] Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capability to perform in circumstances that exercise influence over events in their lives.

- Additional data not available at the time of this writing include dropout, course completion, graduation data, behavior, and attendance data. The fundamental nature of the conclusions presented in this report may change with the analysis of these new data.
- The findings presented in this report are limited to five Collaborative grantees. Due to the small number of grantees involved in Cycle 1, results may change as additional results come in from 16 Cycle 2 grantees during the 2009-10 school year.

The reader is encouraged to interpret all results with caution, keeping these limitations in mind.

Summary

This chapter discussed the four core evaluation objectives of this study, and the research design used to evaluate the Collaborative program. The following chapters describe the findings from the Collaborative interim evaluation. Specifically, Chapters 4 and 5 assess evaluation objective #1 (program implementation) for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees, respectively. Chapter 6 presents findings on evaluation objective #2 (student outcomes) and evaluation objective #3 (career readiness) for Cycle 1 grantees. Chapter 7 provides information on the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative program (evaluation objective #4), primarily for Cycle 1 grantees.

4. Implementation of the Collaborative: Cycle 1 Grantees

In this section, an overview of the implementation of the Collaborative during the 2008-09 school year is provided, along with the evaluation team's findings of the barriers and facilitators of effective implementation. Background characteristics are also provided (e.g., demographics of students served), which provide important context for the findings. This section addresses Evaluation Objective 1: To describe and evaluate the implementation of the Collaborative instructional strategies and programs.

Background of Collaborative Cycle 1 Grantees

Collaborative Cycle 1 consists of five grantees, offering a diverse set of services to student participants. As with most dropout prevention programs, Collaborative grantees do not focus on a particular service area or strategy; rather, they focus on a large number of risk and protective factors that may influence a student's decision to drop out of school. Cycle 1 grantees are located in three general areas of the state: Brownsville (Brownsville ISD and Los Fresnos CISD), San Antonio (School of Excellence in Education and Edgewood ISD), and Houston (Houston ISD).

Brief Description of Each Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantee

Although there were six Collaborative grantees funded in Cycle 1, only five will be covered in the Year 1 findings. One grantee was affected by Hurricane Ike and was not able to implement the program with fidelity in the 2008-09 school year. A brief description of each of the five Cycle 1 grantees, which summarizes information collected during April-May 2009 site visits, follows.[13]

- **Houston ISD** is an urban school district in eastern Texas that is implementing the Collaborative in three public high schools and in one district-run charter high school. Most of the students in these schools are African-American or Hispanic (i.e., White students comprise less than 5% of the student body in all schools) and over 75% are at risk of dropping out of school. The dropout rate for the district was high enough (18.7% for the Class of 2008) that they were required to submit a dropout prevention plan to the state. To address this issue, Houston ISD applied for the Collaborative pilot program grant to implement Coca Cola Valued Youth, a cross-age tutoring program designed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). This program provides students with a cash incentive to participate in and complete the program, which involves about 100 hours of tutoring to elementary school students per school year. The tutors keep a monthly journal to record reflections on their performance and on the tutoring experience. Tutors also have the opportunity to take field trips and listen to guest speakers. Formal classroom observations of the tutors are conducted at least twice during the school year, once by the teacher coordinators and once by the partnering organization. At the end of the school year, the partnering organization interviews two tutors from each school to document the tutors' reflections on the tutoring experience. Student tutors also are required to attend a weekly class period where the partnering organization's curriculum is taught.

- **Los Fresnos** is located in a rural, consolidated independent school district in southern Texas. The district's only high school participated in the Collaborative. The grantee's high school has a student population that is 95% Hispanic and 86% economically disadvantaged.

[13] The program descriptions contained in this section are intended to be a top-line summary. More detailed program information, as well as evaluation findings from each site visit, can be found in Appendix D.

The overall purpose of the Los Fresnos Collaborative program is to meet the needs of the students by providing career and technical activities. The program is designed to help potential dropouts through an intervention that brings in community businesses and local colleges to help the students graduate and gain valuable skills. Los Fresnos' program includes a College, Career, & Technology Academy (CCTA) for their Collaborative students. The CCTA program addresses academic support, family outreach, employment skills, and college readiness standards. CCTA provides programs of study for broad career concentrations in the areas of agriculture science and technology, arts and communication, business education, family and consumer science, health occupations technology, trade and industry, and technology education. Students also receive information on various career pathways and undergo orientation for dual enrollment at the local university and technical school. These program elements are intended to allow students to immediately transfer to college upon completion of high school graduation requirements. Several of the 14 Collaborative partners support career skills and provide employment opportunities for participating students. For example, one of the local colleges provides professional development workshops for instructors and dual enrollment college preparation courses for students. The local technical college also provides dual enrollment courses. In addition, both colleges offer academic support and continuing education opportunities to CCTA students. The counseling center offers student and family support services. Through collaboration with its partners, Los Fresnos seeks to align job skills, student support, continuing education, and dropout prevention in conjunction with recovery academics and research-based strategic curriculum and instruction.

- **School of Excellence in Education** is a suburban charter school district in San Antonio. The high school served by the School of Excellence in Education has a higher at risk (63%) and economically disadvantaged (73%) student population than the state (48% and 55%, respectively). The school has a student population that is 39% African-American, and 53% Hispanic; however, the proportion of LEP students (2%) is significantly lower than the state average (17%). The goal of the School of Excellence in Education's program is to provide incentives for students to stay in school by offering programs and services that differ from the typical academic school day. For example, the School of Excellence in Education partnered with a local college to offer students dual credit courses where students attend class at the college and earn credits for high school and their future college career simultaneously. The students are exposed to the college setting and learn about their options after graduation. The program works by identifying students in Grades 9-12 who are designated as "at risk" for dropout by their academic advisors. Parents of these students are invited to informational meetings where they can learn about the Collaborative pilot program and provide consent for their children's participation. Parents can select to enroll their children anytime after their child has been designated as "at risk." Upon enrollment, teachers and academic advisors ensure that all participants have Personal Graduation Plans (PGPs). PGPs, which are a state requirement for all students identified as at risk,[14] create individualized road maps for students to facilitate their graduation. Both parents and students are involved in this planning process. Additional resources such as the A+ computer program for credit recovery, accrual, and advancement are made available for students who are not on target to graduate within four years of entering high school. Additionally, the Collaborative pilot program includes a reading component that provides one-on-one training to students needing support with their reading skills. Reading teachers work with students until they are reading proficiently, at grade-level. Tutoring and enrichment classes are also made available to students having difficulty with math. As part of their course load, students are encouraged to take pre-advanced placement and advanced placement courses. They are also able to take dual credit courses as juniors and seniors. Parental involvement is also encouraged as part of the Collaborative pilot program.

[14] TEC §28.0212, *Personal Graduation Plan*, 2003.

Parents are invited to attend college campus visits, college fair days, college fair nights, financial literacy trainings, and parent education meetings. They are also provided with information on social service programs as well as volunteer opportunities within the Collaborative pilot program. Finally, the Collaborative pilot program facilitates paid employment placements, internship opportunities, and advances career and vocational training for participating students through its partner organizations.

- **Edgewood** is a suburban, independent school district in south central Texas. Two public high schools participated in the Collaborative. Similar to the district at-large, the high schools selected by Edgewood to participate in the Collaborative pilot program have a higher proportion of economically disadvantaged students (over 90% at each school) than the state average (55%). The student population at both schools is over 95% Hispanic and more than 70% of the students at participating schools are at risk. The goal of Edgewood's program is to reduce dropout and provide students an avenue to graduation. The program presents participating students with career options and provides direct training opportunities. Essentially, Edgewood aims to give their students the necessary tools they need so they will stay in school and succeed upon graduation. This program serves 80 students in Grades 9-12 at two public high schools. The students are selected through an application process; they must meet TEA's at risk criteria for not graduating with their four-year cohort, and must meet two of the following criteria: 16 years of age (or more); have 8 or more high school credits; have not mastered one or more TAKS exams; are over age or under credited; or exhibit an attendance problem. The Collaborative pilot program uses district assessments, TAKS data, and coursework achievement data for decision-making in implementing a student's individual graduation plan, course study, and/or intervention. The academic program for the Collaborative pilot program consists of an online curriculum-based program, Odyssey Ware; seminars; and TAKS preparation classes. Classes are provided at the partnering education and training center in learning communities with a class size ratio of one teacher to ten students and includes a tutoring program staffed by certified teachers. Students are able to take college courses and college placement exams while enrolled in the program. Additionally, workforce training programs with certifications, career exploration, field trips, and counseling and social support services are also offered. In an effort to improve attendance, Edgewood has implemented a number of truancy prevention efforts including, but not limited to, attendance warning letters, parental workshops regarding student attendance, flexible academic scheduling, and free childcare.

- **Brownsville** is an urban independent school district in southern Texas. Five public high schools participated in the Collaborative. The student population in targeted schools ranges from 86% to 99% economically disadvantaged, and 49% to 85% at risk. They also have larger concentrations of Hispanic students, ranging from 94% to 99% of the school population in each of the five targeted schools. Brownsville's Collaborative pilot program targets fourth year students on probation, students who have dropped out, and students who are at risk of dropping out. The top priority of the program is to keep students in school and give them the skills they need to attend college upon graduation. In addition to staying in school, Brownsville is also focused on decreasing juvenile crime among participating students. The presence of probation officers on campus is intended to serve as a deterrent and to help monitor students already on probation. An alternative school supported by the grant is specifically designed to meet the needs of pregnant students. This school also provides parenting classes and other parenting services on campus. Home instruction services are being piloted for pregnant students who do not want to attend the alternative school. Brownsville is piloting a program to train parents in the following areas: alcohol and substance abuse awareness; rules and guidelines for the home environment; low self-esteem; personal graduation plans; and college application and financial aid assistance. Brownsville is also working to have joint parent and student meetings once every other

month and guest speakers once a month to target the requests and interests of the students.

Although all Cycle 1 grants officially started on August 1, 2008 and have received continuation funding through February 29, 2012, there was some variation in the initial date of implementation (Table 4.1). Edgewood started serving students in the second semester of the 2008-09 school year, while all other Cycle 1 grantees started serving students in the first semester.

Table 4.1 contains a general overview of each Cycle 1 grantee, including the grades served, school type (i.e., public or charter), dropout rates prior to grant award, financials, key dates of project operation, and the number of students served. As demonstrated in the program summaries listed above, all Cycle 1 grantees have taken on a multi-pronged strategy consisting of vocational education, academics, college preparation, and career development, coupled with social supports. All five grantees target students in Grades 9-12. One grantee (Los Fresnos) also targets students beyond high school age, up to 25 years old.

Collaborative grantees work mostly in a traditional public school setting. Three of the five grantees operate exclusively in a traditional public school setting (or a school within a school), while one grantee operates in a charter school (School of Excellence in Education) and another grantee (Houston ISD) serves a mix of traditional public school and charter school students.

Four-year dropout rates for the Class of 2007 indicate that four out of the five Collaborative grantees had higher district-level dropout rates than the state average of 11.4%. Although these district-level dropout rates are telling, they should be interpreted with caution. The Collaborative is targeting at risk students from within larger districts, so it is possible to serve a population with acute needs within a district where risk indicators may not appear to be particularly strong.

Most grantees were funded near the $250,000 level, although Edgewood received substantially less funding with its $130,000 grant. All five grantees also brought substantial required matching funds and in-kind service commitments to the table, with total funding amounts ranging from $176,000 in Edgewood to just under $500,000 in Brownsville. More detailed information about funding and expenditures in the 2008-09 school year can be found in Chapter 7 of this report, entitled Cost Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Collaborative.

Although a review of grant applications revealed that 1,355 students were expected to be served by the Collaborative projects, 913 students were actually served during the 2008-09 school year. As shown in Table 4.1, Los Fresnos served the fewest students (n=71), while Brownsville served the most (n=492). The figures presented in Table 4.1 do not include two students who did not have program information associated with their upload data (i.e., student rosters and service data reported to TEA each semester).

Table 4.1: General Information on Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantees

Grantee Name	City	Program Name	Grades Served	Number of Schools Served	Number of Students Served in 2008-09 School Year (actual)	Setting	Dropout Rate (Class of 2007)	Grant Amount (Not Including Continuation Funding)	Matching Funds	Begin Date	Services Begin	End Date
School of Excellence in Education	San Antonio	Project STEPS	9-12	1	148	Charter School	15.8%	$249,975	$72,200	8/1/2008	9/1/2008	2/29/2012
Los Fresnos CISD	Los Fresnos	College, Career and Technology Academy (CCTA)	10-12	1	76	Public school	10.9%	$250,000	$65,000	8/1/2008	8/1/2008	2/29/2012
Houston ISD	Houston	Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program	9-12	4	100	3 Public Schools; 1 Charter School	22.1%	$250,000	$45,000	8/1/2008	7/1/2008	2/29/2012
Edgewood ISD	San Antonio	Edgewood ISD Middle College Program	9-12	2	94	Public school	17.1%	$130,000	$46,000	8/1/2008	1/1/2009	2/29/2012
Brownsville ISD	Brownsville	Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program (+ STARS Program for Course Recovery)	9-12	5	495	Public School	17.9%	$250,000	$240,000	8/1/2008	9/1/2008	2/29/2012

Source: Collaborative grant applications and student downloads

Characteristics of Cycle 1 Collaborative Schools

Altogether, 13 schools implemented the Collaborative as expected during the 2008-09 school year. The student populations at all these schools were mostly at risk and economically disadvantaged (Table 4.2).[15] At risk status ranged from 49% of the student population at Hanna High School in Brownsville to 86% of the student population at Reach Charter School in Houston. The percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged ranged from 73% at the School of Excellence in Education to 99% at Rivera High School in Brownsville.

Students from all 13 Collaborative schools are majority-minority, meaning that the majority of the student population is from a minority group. In fact, the majority of the schools (8 of 13) serving Collaborative students report that their student population is at least 90% Hispanic and 11 of 13 schools have more than 50% Hispanic enrollment. The remaining two schools, both in Houston, have majority African-American student populations (i.e., between 61% and 69%).

The percentage of students in Collaborative schools who were LEP ranges from 2% to 38%, with the highest percentage of LEP students at Lee High School in Houston. The five schools served by Brownsville had the next five highest percentages of students classified as LEP, with between 14% and 29% LEP students.

Table 4.2 also presents mobility rates, defined by TEA as the percentage of the students within a school who have been in membership at the school less than 83% of the school year (i.e., six or more weeks missed in a school year).[16] Mobility ranged from 17% at Hanna High School in Brownsville to 74% at Reach Charter School in Houston. The statewide average, by comparison, was 20% in the 2007-08 school year.

[15] This section describes the characteristics of Collaborative schools, not Collaborative students per se.
[16] Please see the AEIS Glossary for a full definition of mobility: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/aeis/2009/glossary.html

Table 4.2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors at Targeted Schools for Cycle 1 Grantees (2007-08)

Grantee	School Name	Race/ Ethnicity: African-American	Race/ Ethnicity: Hispanic	Race/ Ethnicity: White	Risk Factors: Economically Disadvantaged	Risk Factors: Limited English Proficient	Risk Factors: At risk	Risk Factors: Mobility (2006-07)
School of Excellence in Education	Rick Hawkins High School	39.2%	53.0%	7.1%	73.2%	1.7%	63.1%	50.4%
Edgewood	Memorial High School	2.3%	97.2%	0.5%	91.1%	9.2%	76.3%	28.3%
	JFK High School	0.8%	97.9%	1.0%	95.2%	7.6%	73.2%	21.6%
Houston	Lee High School	13.3%	77.0%	3.5%	88.8%	38.0%	85.2%	38.3%
	Jones High School	69.4%	30.0%	0.2%	75.2%	8.0%	80.2%	27.6%
	Reach Charter School	23.4%	74.1%	2.5%	79.1%	14.6%	86.1%	73.8%
	Wheatley High School	61.4%	37.9%	0.2%	74.3%	9.2%	77.2%	30.6%
Brownsville	Hanna High School	0.1%	94.4%	4.2%	86.4%	14.1%	49.0%	17.4%
	Porter High School	0.0%	98.9%	1.1%	98.5%	28.9%	85.0%	21.6%
	Pace High School	0.3%	96.9%	2.5%	96.8%	18.7%	69.3%	19.6%
	Rivera High School	0.4%	98.4%	1.1%	99.0%	20.5%	67.0%	20.3%
	Lopez High School	0.0%	98.9%	0.9%	98.7%	25.3%	71.9%	22.5%
Los Fresnos	Los Fresnos High School	0.3%	94.6%	5.0%	85.9%	11.6%	59.3%	19.3%
Collaborative Average		**16.2%**	**80.7%**	**2.3%**	**88.0%**	**16.0%**	**72.5%**	**30.1%**
State Average		**14.3%**	**47.2%**	**34.8%**	**55.3%**	**16.7%**	**48.4%**	**19.8%**

Source: AEIS, 2008

Table 4.3 presents additional context regarding the 13 schools involved in the Collaborative in Cycle 1. Two schools out of 13 had an accountability rating of "Recognized" in 2008, seven out of 13 schools (54%) had an accountability rating of "Academically Acceptable", and four schools were "Academically Unacceptable". None of the 13 schools achieved the highest rating of "Exemplary". This accountability rating is based on a school's TAKS scores, State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA II), completion rate, and annual dropout rate.[17]

Five of the 12 schools reporting TAKS data indicated that less than half of their student population met the standard for math in 2008.[18] Among the five Cycle 1 grantee districts, the highest performance on TAKS reading and Math was reported in Los Fresnos and Brownsville, while the

[17] Accountability ratings, in order of distinction, are: "Exemplary" (the highest possible ranking), "Recognized", "Academically Acceptable", and "Academically Unacceptable" (the lowest possible ranking). For more information, please see TEA's Accountability Rating System web page: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/

[18] One school (Reach Charter School in Houston) did not have valid TAKS data due to small numbers of students taking the TAKS exam. Small cell sizes are masked by TEA to ensure the confidentiality of students' results.

lowest performance was reported in Houston. One school (Los Fresnos High School) had a TAKS math passing rate above the state average of 80% and none of the Collaborative schools had a TAKS reading passing rate above the state average of 91%. However, two schools (Los Fresnos High School and Hanna High School in Brownsville) had TAKS reading passing rates equal to the state average.

None of the 13 schools reported enrollment in special education that was at or below the state average of 10%. Moreover, all 13 grantee schools enrolled students in career and technology education at a much higher rate than the state average of 21%. In fact, all 13 schools reported that over half of the student body was enrolled in career and technology education.

Table 4.3: Academic Performance and Enrollment in Special Programs at Targeted Schools (2007-08) for Cycle 1 Grantees

Grantee	School Name	Accountability Rating	Met TAKS Standard in Math	Met TAKS Standard in Reading	Enrolled in Special Education	Enrolled in Career & Technology Education
School of Excellence in Education	Rick Hawkins High School	Academically Unacceptable	46%	78%	14.0%	53.9%
Edgewood	Memorial High School	Academically Acceptable	46%	77%	16.8%	54.3%
	JFK High School	Academically Acceptable	49%	84%	14.1%	65.3%
Houston	Lee High School	Academically Unacceptable	51%	70%	10.1%	78.7%
	Jones High School	Academically Unacceptable	39%	67%	20.1%	65.1%
	Reach Charter School	Academically Acceptable	NR	NR	18.4%	70.3%
	Wheatley High School	Academically Unacceptable	45%	73%	21.2%	85.1%
Brownsville	Hanna High School	Recognized	78%	91%	11.7%	75.9%
	Porter High School	Academically Acceptable	64%	78%	16.5%	77.9%
	Pace High School	Academically Acceptable	64%	85%	13.6%	73.2%
	Rivera High School	Academically Acceptable	62%	84%	13.0%	89.3%
	Lopez High School	Academically Acceptable	64%	80%	17.2%	79.6%
Los Fresnos	Los Fresnos High School	Recognized	84%	91%	11.8%	68.3%
Collaborative Average			**58%**	**80%**	**15.3%**	**72.1%**
State Average			**80%**	**91%**	**9.8%**	**20.9%**

Source: AEIS
NR=Not Reported

In summary, relative to the state average, Collaborative students are more likely to be from a minority racial/ethnic group, more likely to be economically disadvantaged, more mobile, have lower academic performance, and more at risk of dropping out. Considering that economic disadvantage, low academic performance, and mobility have been established as risk factors of dropping out (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007), and that minorities and at risk students in Texas have consistently higher dropout rates, the evaluation team can conclude that the Collaborative is reaching schools with a large population of students at high risk of dropping out. Of course, we must also consider whether the Collaborative is serving at risk students within those schools. This analysis is included later in this section of the report.

The evaluation team further broke down school-level data to examine demographic differences between different grade-level cohorts (Table 4.4). Students who were in Grade 9 in 2007-08 had the highest rates of economic disadvantage, LEP status, and special education status – and the lowest rates of passing TAKS reading and TAKS math – compared to students in other grade levels. By contrast, students who were in Grade 11 in 2007-08 had lower rates on risk indicators, and much stronger academic results. Additional descriptive data on Cycle 1 grantees (including Port Arthur) is included in Appendix G.

Table 4.4: School Baseline Characteristics of Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantees, by Grade Level

Grade	LEP	Economically Disadvantaged	At risk	Special Ed.	Career-Technology Ed.	Met TAKS Reading*	Met TAKS Math*	Met TAKS Science*
9th	21%	90%	73%	17%	66%	78%	52%	N/A
10th	16%	89%	69%	15%	74%	80%	52%	47%
11th	12%	87%	73%	14%	79%	83%	70%	71%
12th	11%	86%	71%	14%	74%	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: PEIMS and TAKS data, 2007-08 school year
* TAKS not administered in Grade 12; TAKS science exam administered only in Grades 10 and 11.

Characteristics of Students Served – Baseline Information (2007-08)

Table 4.5 below reports demographic information on 900 of the 913 students enrolled in Cycle 1 Collaborative programs.[19] Collaborative is serving males and females relatively equally with slightly under half of Collaborative students (49%) female. Moreover, 85% of Collaborative students were Hispanic, while 12% were African-American, and 3% were White. The Collaborative is therefore serving a majority-minority population.

Table 4.5: Cycle 1 2008-09 Demographics of Students Who Participated in Collaborative Activities

	Female	Male	White	African-American	Hispanic	Native American
Number	438	462	27	109	759	5
Percent	48.7%	51.3%	3.0%	12.1%	84.3%	0.6%

Source: PEIMS, 2008-09 data; *n*=900 (13 missing records)

Table 4.6 breaks down the number of students served by grade level and by grantee. Although three-quarters (76%) of the students served by the Cycle 1 Collaborative programs were projected to be high school seniors (according to grant applications), the rosters of Collaborative students served (i.e., uploads) indicated a much more even distribution by grade level. Originally, Brownsville and the School of Excellence in Education reported that they intended to serve 12th graders only; however, both grantees opened up their programs to all grade levels. Grade level data were missing for 22 cases.

[19] An appropriate match to TEA data sources could not be made for the remaining 13 students. Demographic data on these students is therefore not available.

Table 4.6: Number of Cycle 1 Collaborative Students Served, by Grade Level

	9th	10th	11th	12th	Total
School of Excellence in Education	36	30	42	38	**146**
Houston	40	8	2	49	**99**
Los Fresnos	1	9	12	48	**70**
Edgewood	7	26	40	16	**89**
Brownsville	131	158	124	67	**480**
Total	**215 (24%)**	**231 (26%)**	**220 (25%)**	**218 (25%)**	**884 (100%)**
Projected in Grant Application	**60 (4%)**	**95 (7%)**	**175 (13%)**	**1,025 (76%)**	**1,355 (100%)**

Source: PEIMS, 2008-09 data, 2008-09; *n*=884; 22 students missing grade level data and 7 cases with grades 6-8.

Student rosters provided by Collaborative grantees include 913 students. The following number of students were served by each program (the proportion of Collaborative students served by each grantee is indicated in parentheses):

- Brownsville: 495 students (54.2%)[20]
- Houston: 100 students (11.0%)
- Los Fresnos: 76 students (8.3%)
- Edgewood: 94 students (10.3%)
- School of Excellence in Education: 148 students (16.2%).

As shown in Table 4.7, 83% of Collaborative students were considered at risk and 87% were economically disadvantaged. Specifically, 22% of Collaborative students were eligible for free lunch, 3% of students were eligible for reduced price meals, and 62% were categorized as "other economically disadvantaged". Moreover, about 25% of students were LEP, and 15% were special education students. About 60% of Collaborative students were enrolled in career or technical education courses.

Table 4.7: Cycle 1 2008-09 Demographic Characteristics: At risk, LEP, Special Education, Economic Status and Career and Technical Education Enrollment

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
At risk	756	82.8%
Eligible for Free Meals	197	21.6%
Eligible for Reduced-Price Meals	29	3.3%
Other Economic Disadvantage	568	62.1%
Not Economically Disadvantaged	97	10.7%
Special Education	141	15.4%
LEP	228	25.0%
Enrolled in One or More State-Approved Career and Technical Courses as an Elective	191	20.1%
No Participation in Career and Technical Courses	340	37.4%
Participant in the District's Career and Technical Program	293	32.1%
Participant in District's Tech Prep Courses	67	7.4%

Source: PEIMS, 2008-09 school year; *n*=891 (22 students were identified but could not be located in TEA data)

[20] Because Brownsville accounted for over half of the students served by the Collaborative program, the evaluation results presented in the next section are heavily influenced by this district.

Key Partners

Table 4.8 presents the key partnerships identified by grantees. Collaborative grantees were engaged with a wide array of partners; however, differences exist among grantees in the types of partners engaged. For example, Brownsville and Edgewood collaborated with municipal partners, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Department of Community Initiatives, while the School of Excellence in Education worked with faith-based partners. Los Fresnos engaged a number of local businesses as partners in the grant program. These local businesses typically provide either jobs or mentors for students in the program. Four of the five grantees engaged in partnerships with colleges and universities, while two of the five grantees partnered with courts or other justice system focused organizations. All five Collaborative grantees formed partnerships with community nonprofits. The only Cycle 1 grantee that did not engage a wide variety of partners was Houston. This grantee partnered solely with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) to implement a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

Two programs engaged partners specifically targeting/serving the Hispanic/Latino community. The other three grantees did not make similar outreach efforts; however, one explanation could be that the Hispanic population is so large in many places that the grantee and the community necessarily are one in the same and therefore specific outreach efforts are not needed.

Table 4.8: Key Partnerships, by Organization Type for Cycle 1 Grantees

Partner Type	School of Excellence in Education	Los Fresnos CISD	Houston ISD	Edgewood ISD	Brownsville ISD
College/ University	St. Philip's College	Tech Prep of Rio Grande Valley; Texas State Technical College; The University of Brownsville and Texas Southmost College		Alamo Community College District; Westside Education & Training Center	The University of Texas-Brownsville
Faith-based Organizations	Antioch Community Transformation Network (ACTN)				
Community Nonprofits	Nevil Shed's Second Chances	Cameron Works-First Generation In-School Youth Program (provides 25 hours of leadership/ community volunteer time)	Intercultural Development Research Association (Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program)	Project QUEST	Cameron Works
Justice	San Antonio Fighting Back				Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department
Latino Community Focused	National Council for La Raza (NCLR)	United Migrant Opportunity Services			
Community Businesses		Lighthouse Counseling Center; Valley Federal Credit Union; Sheraton South Padre Island Hotels; Keppel AmFELS, Inc., A&V Lopez Supermarket; Knight's Inn & Suites; Los Fresnos Eye Clinic & Optical, Inc.; Los Fresnos Family Dentistry			
Government Organizations				City of San Antonio Department of Community Initiatives	Brownsville Chamber of Commerce

Source: Collaborative grant applications; site visit data

In order to determine whether the Collaborative program was perceived as being effective, the evaluation team decided to ask the people in the best position to respond: Collaborative grantee stakeholders. Stakeholders were asked to complete a short survey prior to the evaluation team's on-site interviews, with 55 completing the surveys. Responses were quite helpful in identifying areas where Collaborative has been most effective. In addition, case study data enriched analysis of stakeholder insights about program effectiveness.

Collaborative stakeholders were asked to rate the success of the partnership between the district and its partners (Table 4.9). Well over half (60%) of stakeholders rated partnerships as "very successful" and no stakeholders rated partnerships as somewhat unsuccessful or unsuccessful. Altogether, over 90% of stakeholders rated partnerships as being at least somewhat successful.

Table 4.9: Cycle 1 Stakeholder Survey: How Would You Rate the Success of the Relationship between Your District and Your Partners?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	33	60.0%
Somewhat Successful	17	30.9%
Neutral	3	5.5%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Don't Know	2	3.6%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Services Offered by Collaborative Grantees

Appendix F provides detail on the types of services offered by Collaborative grantees, as well as an indication of whether the services provided were directly from the grantee or brokered through an outside partner/agency. Four main types of services, highlighted below, were identified.

Workforce Skill Development

All five grantees offer some sort of paid employment opportunities. Four grantees offer job shadowing and three grantees offer career paths/counseling and vocational education. Many of the vocational-related services are offered through partnerships with outside agencies.

Academic Support Services

Although most Collaborative grantees provide for a vocational component, it is evident that college preparation and attendance was a primary goal for most grantees. All Cycle 1 grantees, with the exception of Houston, help Collaborative students plan for postsecondary education, and many of these services are offered through partnerships with local colleges and universities. All five Collaborative grantees offer a range of academic support services. For example, four of the five grantees offer tutoring services (mostly direct), and four grantees also provide professional development for teachers. Other commonly-provided services include dual credit courses (four grantees), individual graduation/education plans (four grantees), and credit recovery (three grantees). Eleven of the 13 types of academic services provided are directly administered by the grantee organizations. Services provided by outside agencies are most commonly used in the context of partnering with local universities, offering outside professional development opportunities, or providing referrals.

Student Support Services

When the Collaborative Program was initially developed, it was recognized that students bring a range of risk factors and other problems into the school; therefore, a purely academic or vocational approach would only solve part of the dropout problem. Through an integrated array of services, students can find a mentor, counseling services, transportation, child care, or other supports to ensure that they can concentrate on learning. The most common types of student support services offered include transportation services (three grantees) and the provision of a dedicated service coordinator (three grantees). Two Cycle 1 grantees—Los Fresnos and Houston—are making dedicated efforts to improve school climate, which has been shown to be a risk factor for dropout (Hammond et al., 2007).

Three of the five Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees offer some type of character education, and three of the five grantees provide motivational speakers and additional programs to increase attendance. Other innovative programs, such as financial literacy classes and community service activities, are being implemented.

Student/Family Support Services

All five Cycle1 grantees involve families in their programs. All five grantees provide parenting education, and also involve families in fairs, counseling sessions, or other ways to ensure parental involvement in a student's education and well-being. Two grantees—the School of Excellence in Education and Brownsville—provide for home visits with families.

Intensity of Services Provided by Collaborative Grantees

Grant coordinators for Cycle 1 reported student-level service data through the Collaborative student uploads. These data included records for 913 students involved in Collaborative program activities during the 2008-09 school year, and up to three primary service areas were identified for each student. As shown in Table 4.10, more than two-thirds of Collaborative students (68%) received academic support (e.g., tutoring, credit recovery) for an average intensity of 5.7 hours per week. One third of Collaborative students received counseling (supportive guidance) for an average of 1.6 hours per week. Moreover, close to one-fourth of the students participated in behavior support services, which were, on average, more intensive than counseling support. Behavioral services/support averaged 2.8 hours per week. A smaller number of students were involved in other activities such as connections to resources (e.g., social services in the community [3.0 hours per week]), career development (2.0 hours per week), and family support (1.9 hours per week). Grant Coordinators were also asked to provide information on how often (number of days) a student was absent from program activities. Respondents indicated that 305 Collaborative students (34%) had at least one absence, with a range from one day to 29 days. Among the students who were absent at least once, the average number of absences was 8.7 days over the 2008-09 school year.

Table 4.10: Cycle 1 Services Received: Dosage and Number of Student Recipients

Type of Service	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants Receiving Service	Average Number of Hours per Week
Academic	610	67.6%	5.7
Counseling	308	34.1%	1.6
Behavior Support	220	24.4%	2.8
Connection to Resources	83	9.2%	3.0
Career Development	70	7.8%	2.0
Family Support	7	0.8%	1.9

Source: Collaborative 2008-09 Student Upload Data; *n*=913

In their report entitled, *Dropout Risk Factors and Exemplary Programs, A Technical Report*, Hammond et al. (2007) laid out risk factors for dropout that have been demonstrated in the research literature. The authors identified a number of domains of risk, including (a) individual background characteristics, (b) early adult responsibilities, (c) social attitudes, values, and behavior, (d) school performance, (e) school engagement, (f) school behavior, (g) family background characteristics, and (h) family engagement. Given that the service areas listed in Table 4.10 are intended to address all of the domains above (i.e., at least the ones that can be modified through the provision of services), it stands to reason that the Collaborative is properly addressing a complicated, multi-faceted range of risk factors with an appropriate range of services and interventions.

Facilitators and Barriers to Implementation

Collaborative grantees face a number of challenges in the implementation of their programs. In the following section, key facilitators and barriers to program implementation have been identified, based on interviews with Collaborative program staff and partners:

Facilitators to implementation included:

- *Diversity in programming*: Diversity in the services provided by Collaborative grantees recognizes that students have complex, interrelated problems that require multiple interventions. There is rarely a "magic bullet" in turning a child's life around (Porowski, Smink, Horwood et al., 2008). It is a complex process that requires hard work, and given the fact that every child is different, offering a wide array of services maximizes a program's chances of success.
- *Cultural competence*: Collaborative grantees are working in highly diverse areas with at risk populations. It was evident from the grantee applications that Collaborative grantees understand the importance of cultural competence,[21] especially as it relates to engaging both students and their families in dropout prevention efforts. For example, one grantee engaged in outreach in both Spanish and English to ensure that parents understood the value of the Collaborative program.
- *Good communication*: Case study findings suggest that solid relationships and regular communication between collaborative partners, school staff, and the district facilitated program implementation. All Cycle 1 grantees mentioned that clear and effective communication strategies were established and maintained during the first year of programming.

Barriers to implementation include:

- *Coordination of a large number of partners*: Given that the average Collaborative grantee had 5.6 outside partnerships, tracking those partnerships and coordinating services proved to be a challenge in some cases. For example, one grant coordinator reported feeling stretched thin in providing services from a number of partners across a number of sites.
- *Parent participation*: Some grantees reported that parents of participating students were not supportive of the Collaborative program. In multiple grantee locations, parents were reported to lack understanding of how specific Collaborative initiatives would help their children (e.g., providing students with the opportunity to attend college). To overcome this barrier, grantees invited parents to attend seminars, workshops, and college and/or career fairs.
- *Poor economic conditions*: Collaborative grantees had to scale back their implementation of paid jobs programs due to poor economic conditions. Because many of the skills that Collaborative students need to be college and career ready depend upon hands-on

[21] Cultural competence refers to the ability to effectively interact with people of different cultures.

experience, it may be more challenging for grantees to show positive effects in areas such as ethical workplace behaviors, technological knowledge, and leadership skills.
- *Natural disasters*: Houston and Port Arthur were impacted by Hurricane Ike (September 2008). Both districts got off to a slower start than anticipated because schools were closed for two weeks in Houston and four weeks in Port Arthur at the beginning of the 2008-09 school year. Houston was able to begin implementation shortly after schools were open, while Port Arthur experienced a much longer delay in program implementation.

For further reading on the implementation of dropout interventions, the What Works Clearinghouse released a practice guide on dropout prevention (Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008). This practice guide, which was developed by a number of researchers and practitioners in dropout prevention, outlines some key barriers in the implementation of dropout prevention programs and suggested approaches to tackle those problems.

Summary: Similarities and Differences in Implementation between Grantees

Although the five Collaborative grantees may at first appear to be completely different in their approach, they had have some key commonalities that will facilitate the evaluation:

- All grantees aimed to increase graduation, reduce dropout, increase job skills, and provide employment opportunities.
- All grantees provided linkages to outside organizations to ensure that needs are being met in the most targeted manner possible.
- All grantees operated in high-risk, high-need areas.
- All grantees had a family involvement component.
- All grantees offered paid employment and academic support services to students.
- All grantees offered a range of services to address a wide range of risk factors for dropping out of school.

Although the five Collaborative grantees all took fundamentally different approaches to addressing dropout in their respective districts, it is evident that all five grantees implemented their programs consistent with the grant requirements, and they also drew upon whatever local resources that were available at the time.

Dropout prevention is ultimately not a “one-size-fits-all” type of endeavor, and with differences in local resources come differences in the ability to innovate. Key differences observed among Cycle 1 grantees include:

- The student population in two Houston schools was predominantly African-American; the student population in all other schools was predominantly Hispanic.
- Los Fresnos and Brownsville had stronger baseline TAKS scores than the other three Cycle 1 grantees, especially in Math.
- Brownsville’s program had a behavioral/justice focus, while Houston and the School of Excellence in Education focused on academics and college attendance more than the other grantees. Edgewood and Los Fresnos had a stronger focus on career preparation.
- Brownsville served a much larger student population than the other four Cycle 1 grantees.

Despite these differences, Collaborative grantees encountered common challenges in the implementation of their programs. Most notably, coordinating a large number of partners proved to be a logistical challenge for almost all grantees, and the weak economy prevented many grantees

from fully implementing their internship programs. Collaborative grantees also showed common strengths, including diversity in program offerings, and excellent communication with community partners, school staff, parents, and students.

In Year 2 of the evaluation, the evaluation team will aim to capture further detail on the implementation of Cycle 1 grantees. In particular, new data collection has been planned that will allow the team to assess the quality of collaboration between grantees and their community partners. Traditionally, collaboration is measured by the number of partnerships developed, number of MOUs signed, or the number of contacts made. The evaluation team hopes to delve deeper into this concept to provide TEA and its grantees with a stronger framework by which quality collaboration can be understood.

5. Implementation of the Collaborative: Cycle 2 Grantees

This chapter provides a brief overview of Cycle 2 grantees, and presents baseline characteristics (i.e., from the 2008-09 school year) for this cohort. As will be presented, Cycle 2 grantees were very similar to Cycle 1 grantees in terms of program objectives and services offered, but they operated in slightly different types of settings. Because Cycle 2 grantees were in the initial stages of implementation, they are not the primary focus of this report; however, this chapter is intended to provide a first look at this new grantee cohort, as they will be the subject of future evaluation reports.

Background of Collaborative Cycle 2 Grantees

Allocated funding for the 16 Cycle 2 grantees for the entire project period is $4 million, with the maximum Cycle 2 award amount per grantee set at $250,000. In addition, 10% of the amount requested through the Collaborative grant in matching funds must be provided for Cycle 2 grantees by the project partners.

There are 16 Cycle 2 grantees located across the state, serving 31 schools that are implementing the Collaborative grant. This cohort includes:

- Austin ISD
- Carrizo Springs CISD
- Corsicana ISD
- Dallas ISD
- Dallas Can! Academy Charter
- Del Valle ISD
- Everman ISD
- George Gervin Academy Charter School
- Harlandale ISD
- McAllen ISD
- Palestine ISD
- Pasadena ISD
- Plainview ISD
- San Antonio ISD
- Snyder ISD
- Spring Branch ISD.

As with Cycle 1, each Cycle 2 program must address four required service areas: (a) workforce skill development, (b) academic support, (c) attendance improvement, and (d) student and family support (TEA, 2008c). Each Cycle 2 grantee developed a unique program that reflects the needs of their students; for example, some grantees created a separate campus for their program, while others are operating programs within participating high schools. Additionally, the individual focus of each program is different. While all programs include aspects of all four service areas, some programs emphasize certain areas over others.

Table 5.1 contains a general overview of each Cycle 2 grantee, including the grades served, school type (i.e., public or charter), financials, key dates of project operation, and the number of students served. The majority of Cycle 2 grantees (75%) are not implementing a pre-existing branded

Table 5.1: General Information on Cycle 2 Collaborative Grantees

Grantee Name	City	Branded Program Name	Grades Served	Number of Schools Served	Number of Students Served (projected)	Setting	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Begin Date	Services Begin	End Date
Austin ISD	Austin	Jobs, Inc. Program / Dropout Recovery Pilot Program	9-12	2	200	Public School	$249,999	$211,784	4/1/2009	5/1/2009	2/28/2011
Carrizo Springs CISD	Carrizo Springs	Self-developed program	9-12	1	307	Public School	$237,500	$25,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Corsicana ISD	Corsicana	Options Program	9-12	1	125	Public School	$174,777	$17,500	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Dallas ISD	Dallas	Self-developed program	9, 12	3	120	Public School	$250,000	$226,232	4/1/2009	8/1/2009	2/28/2011
Dallas Can! Academy Charter	Dallas	Self-developed program	9-12	1	200	Charter School	$250,000	$30,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Del Valle ISD	Del Valle	Pathway to Graduation	9	1	200	Public School	$250,000	$30,000	4/1/2009	1/5/2009	2/28/2011
Everman ISD	Everman	Self-developed program	9-12	1	200	Public School	$250,000	$27,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
George Gervin Academy Charter School	San Antonio	George Gervin Academy Pilot Program	9-12	2	272	Charter School	$250,000	$25,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Harlandale ISD	San Antonio	Self-developed program	9-12	3	200	Public School	$248,850	$48,500	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011

Grantee Name	City	Branded Program Name	Grades Served	Number of Schools Served	Number of Students Served (projected)	Setting	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Begin Date	Services Begin	End Date
McAllen ISD	McAllen	McAllen Learning Institute	9	1	225	Public School	$224,927	$25,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Palestine ISD	Palestine	Self-developed program	9-12	1	471	Public School	$250,000	$29,400	4/1/2009	5/1/2009	2/28/2011
Pasadena ISD	Pasadena	Self-developed program	9-11	5	200	Public School	$250,000	$60,350	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Plainview ISD	Plainview	Self-developed program	9-12	2	300	Public School	$250,000	$27,950	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
San Antonio ISD	San Antonio	Project Connect	9	1	125	Public School	$250,000	$25,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011
Snyder ISD	Snyder	Self-developed program	9-12	1	83	Public School	$250,000	$30,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2009
Spring Branch ISD	Houston	Self-developed program	9, 11, 12	1	240	Public School	$250,000	$25,000	4/1/2009	4/1/2009	2/28/2011

Source: Cycle 2 Grant Applications

dropout program for their Collaborative grant. Instead, they are creating their own original programs that are tailored specifically to their needs and incorporate dropout prevention strategies such as college preparation, academics, vocational education, and career development. Additionally, the grantees provide social support for students and families. Most of the grantees serve students in Grades 9-12, although a few grantees only serve Grade 9 students.

The number of students projected to be served ranges from 83 at Snyder ISD to 471 at Palestine ISD, with most Cycle 2 grantees intending to serve 200 students. The majority of the students will be served in a public school setting, while two grantees will serve students in a charter school setting. In addition, most of the Cycle 2 grantees were funded at or close to the $250,000 level. Corsicana ISD received the least funding at $174,777 followed by McAllen ISD at $224,927.

Characteristics of Cycle 2 Collaborative Schools

With the 16 Cycle 2 awards in the spring of 2009, a much larger pool of Collaborative grantees have become part of the evaluation. Altogether, the 16 Collaborative Cycle 2 grantees are implementing their programs in 31 schools. Like the Cycle 1 grantees, Cycle 2 Collaborative grantees operate in particularly high-risk, high need schools (Table 5.2). In all but two schools, the majority of the student population was listed as being at risk. Moreover, in 27 of 31 Cycle 2 schools, the majority of the student body is economically disadvantaged. Racial/ethnic breakdowns are similar between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 schools. As with Cycle 1, all Cycle 2 schools are majority-minority, with 23 of the 31 schools having predominantly Hispanic populations, and three of the 31 schools having predominantly African-American populations. Five schools did not have more than 50% representation from a single racial/ethnic group.

The percentage of students who are LEP ranges from 0% to 26%, with the highest percentage of LEP students in McAllen schools. Schools in Austin, Dallas, and Spring Branch ISDs also have schools with a proportion of LEP students above the state average of 17%.

Table 5.3 presents additional context regarding the 31 schools involved in the Collaborative in Cycle 2. Of the 27 schools that had accountability ratings in 2008, 17 received a rating of “Academically Acceptable” while four schools received an “Academically Unacceptable” rating. Five schools received a “Recognized” rating, while one school received an “Exemplary” rating. Four schools were given a rating using the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) procedures (three schools were Academically Acceptable and one was Academically Unacceptable).

Of the 28 schools reporting TAKS results, less than half of the students met TAKS math standards in three schools. By contrast, in all schools reporting TAKS reading results, the majority of students met standards. TAKS results were particularly weak in the Dallas Can! Academy Charter district and particularly strong in McAllen ISD and Spring Branch ISD.

Unlike Cycle 1 schools, where all reported enrollment in special education that was above the state average, 12 Cycle 2 schools had enrollment in special education below the state average of 9.4%. Four of the Cycle 2 schools also reported enrollment rates in career and technology education below the state average of 21.4%. By contrast, all Cycle 1 schools were above the state average on this measure.

Table 5.2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors at Targeted Schools for Cycle 2 Grantees (2008-09)

Grantee	School Name	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At risk	Mobility (2007-08)
Austin	Eastside Memorial High School	16.6%	82.7%	0.6%	89.8%	23.5%	90.4%	NR
Carrizo Springs	Carrizo Springs High School	1.3%	90.1%	8.3%	72.9%	4.2%	50.1%	18.5%
Corsicana	Corsicana High School	23.4%	38.6%	35.7%	56.6%	4.9%	55.7%	16.3%
Dallas Can! Academy Charter	Texans Can! Academy Dallas South Campus	91.0%	8.1%	0.9%	91.0%	1.9%	93.2%	75.0%
Dallas	Moises E. Molina High School	7.0%	90.6%	1.6%	78.9%	23.8%	79.2%	21.0%
	Franklin D. Roosevelt High School	81.9%	17.8%	0.4%	79.3%	6.3%	81.4%	37.0%
	W.W. Samuel High School	39.1%	59.5%	1.2%	81.2%	21.6%	85.1%	33.7%
Del Valle	Del Valle High School	16.5%	72.2%	10.1%	70.2%	8.4%	68.5%	20.5%
Everman	Everman High School	55.9%	35.1%	7.2%	64.8%	6.4%	71.1%	25.7%
George Gervin Academy	George Gervin Academy	44.5%	47.7%	6.7%	95.4%	0.0%	90.9%	60.5%
Harlandale	Harlandale High School	0.7%	97.6%	1.5%	89.5%	7.7%	67.3%	20.4%
	McCollum High School	0.4%	93.3%	5.9%	83.8%	2.9%	68.9%	23.6%
	Hac DAEP High School	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	96.3%	3.7%	100.0%	100.0%
McAllen	McAllen High School	0.6%	85.9%	12.1%	49.1%	18.4%	60.8%	20.7%
	Memorial High School	0.6%	89.3%	8.3%	51.0%	13.4%	58.5%	19.3%
	Instr/Guid Center	0.0%	96.2%	1.9%	66.0%	26.4%	84.9%	99.5%
	Rowe High School	1.0%	92.3%	4.8%	46.9%	17.8%	60.6%	23.4%
	Lamar Academy	0.8%	90.1%	8.4%	58.0%	11.5%	96.9%	64.9%
	Southwest Key Program	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	57.1%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Achieve Early College High School	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	80.2%	2.1%	8.3%	NR
Palestine	Palestine High School	26.7%	32.3%	40.0%	52.0%	2.7%	50.7%	28.3%
Pasadena	Pasadena High School	1.3%	92.6%	5.7%	78.9%	13.5%	71.4%	20.6%
	Sam Rayburn High School	2.4%	82.8%	14.4%	75.9%	11.3%	55.3%	23.0%
	South Houston High School	10.7%	82.5%	5.7%	78.6%	11.5%	56.0%	23.1%
	Dobie High School	18.6%	51.1%	19.1%	47.8%	5.1%	61.9%	15.1%
	The Summit High School	10.5%	71.1%	13.2%	60.5%	7.9%	89.5%	99.4%
Plainview	Plainview High School	5.7%	69.6%	24.0%	53.1%	3.4%	50.7%	22.1%
	Houston School	6.5%	74.0%	19.5%	58.4%	2.6%	97.4%	89.0%
San Antonio	Highlands High School	9.1%	83.8%	6.9%	80.7%	6.2%	76.8%	24.0%
Snyder	Snyder High School	4.3%	47.6%	46.7%	31.0%	2.4%	43.7%	15.1%
Spring Branch	Spring Woods High School	9.2%	69.8%	16.9%	62.9%	18.2%	58.9%	19.9%
Collaborative Average		**15.7%**	**72.4%**	**10.6%**	**69.0%**	**9.4%**	**70.5%**	**40.0%**
State Average		**14.2%**	**47.9%**	**34.0%**	**56.7%**	**16.9%**	**48.3%**	**19.8%**

Source: AEIS. All figures are from the 2008-09 school year unless otherwise noted.
NR=Not Reported

Table 5.3: Academic Performance and Enrollment in Special Programs at Targeted Schools (2008-09) for Cycle 2 Grantees

Grantee	School Name	Accountability Rating[22]	Met TAKS Standard in Math	Met TAKS Standard in Reading	Enrolled in Special Education	Enrolled in Career & Technology Education
Austin	Eastside Memorial High School	Academically Unacceptable	45%	70%	19.6%	49.5%
Carrizo Springs	Carrizo Springs High School	Academically Acceptable	58%	87%	12.2%	89.8%
Corsicana	Corsicana High School	Academically Acceptable	69%	90%	10.2%	83.1%
Dallas Can! Academy Charter	Texans Can! Academy Dallas South Campus	AEA: Academically Unacceptable	28%	65%	13.0%	10.7%
Dallas	Moises E. Molina High School	Recognized	72%	88%	9.3%	56.1%
	Franklin D. Roosevelt High School	Academically Unacceptable	54%	76%	15.5%	43.8%
	W.W. Samuel High School	Academically Acceptable	47%	82%	15.0%	62.7%
Del Valle	Del Valle High School	Recognized	70%	90%	13.2%	86.9%
Everman	Everman High School	Academically Acceptable	66%	90%	10.2%	66.1%
George Gervin Academy	George Gervin Academy	AEA: Academically Acceptable	64%	60%	5.1%	8.9%
Harlandale	Harlandale High School	Recognized	66%	88%	12.8%	73.0%
	McCollum High School	Academically Acceptable	60%	90%	14.6%	78.1%
	Hac DAEP High School	Not Rated: Other	NR	NR	33.3%	22.2%
McAllen	McAllen High School	Academically Acceptable	70%	89%	7.9%	67.2%
	Memorial High School	Academically Acceptable	75%	90%	7.7%	72.4%
	Instr/Guid Center	Not Rated: Other	NR	NR	15.1%	22.6%
	Rowe High School	Academically Acceptable	70%	89%	7.5%	71.1%
	Lamar Academy	AEA: Academically Acceptable	69%	91%	3.8%	73.3%
	Southwest Key Program	Not Rated: Other	NR	NR	0.0%	0.0%
	Achieve Early College High School	Exemplary	97%	96%	2.1%	0.0%
Palestine	Palestine High School	Recognized	80%	91%	12.6%	62.1%
Pasadena	Pasadena High School	Academically Acceptable	59%	83%	7.1%	75.5%
	Sam Rayburn High School	Academically Unacceptable	64%	85%	7.7%	53.3%
	South Houston High School	Academically Acceptable	62%	85%	7.0%	56.5%
	Dobie High School	Academically Acceptable	69%	91%	5.9%	61.5%
	The Summit High School	Not Rated: Other	NR	NR	10.5%	50.0%
Plainview	Plainview High School	Academically Acceptable	67%	92%	16.2%	87.8%
	Houston School	AEA: Academically Acceptable	50%	90%	13.0%	28.6%
San Antonio	Highlands High School	Academically Acceptable	52%	87%	15.0%	87.6%
Snyder	Snyder High School	Academically Acceptable	70%	92%	13.7%	89.8%
Spring Branch	Spring Woods High School	Recognized	77%	91%	11.5%	57.8%
Collaborative Average			**64%**	**86%**	**11.2%**	**56.4%**
State Average			**82%**	**91%**	**9.4%**	**21.4%**

Source: AEIS. All figures are from the 2008-09 school year unless otherwise noted.
NR=Not Reported

[22] An accountability rating preceded by "AEA" indicates that the campus was given a rating under the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) procedures.

Key Partners

Cycle 2 grantees also partnered with a wide range of community organizations and local institutions of higher education (Table 5.4).

- 13 out of 16 grantees partnered with local colleges and universities.
- 5 grantees partnered with faith-based organizations.
- 12 grantees partnered with community nonprofits.
- 3 grantees partnered with a justice department.
- 3 grantees partnered with Latino community-focused organizations.
- 13 grantees partnered with local community businesses.
- 5 grantees partnered with government organizations.

Cycle 2 grantees were most likely to partner with local colleges and universities and community businesses. They were least likely to partner with justice departments, faith-based organizations, or Latino community-focused organizations.

Services Offered

Academic support is the most prominent service offered by the majority of Cycle 2 grantees, followed by workforce skill development. These two services form the core of a large proportion of Cycle 2 programs, much like Cycle 1. Most programs include dual credit, credit recovery, internships, career training, and tutoring/mentoring. Student and family support services are the main focus of at least three programs, while attendance improvement often plays a smaller role in every program. Programs that focus on student and family support include implementing individualized case management, increasing parental involvement, and increasing access to community services. Each required service component addresses an important aspect of dropout prevention.

Table 5.4: Key Collaborative Partnerships: Cycle 2 Grantees

Partner Type	George Gervin Academy	Corsicana ISD	Snyder ISD	Everman ISD	Dallas Can Academy	San Antonio ISD	Del Valle ISD	Dallas ISD
College/ University		Navarro College	Western Texas College	Tarrant County College; University of North Texas	Cedar Valley College; University of Northern Texas Dallas Campus; Paul Quinn College	St. Philips College Southwest Campus		Eastfield College; Mountain View College; Southern Methodist University
Faith-based Organizations		Presbyterian Child and Family Services						Gospel Lighthouse Church; Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship
Community Nonprofits	Communities in Schools; CommuniCare Health Center; Beat AIDS Coalition Trust; George Gervin Learning Center			Communities In Schools; Big Brothers Big Sisters	Dallas IMedia Network; Dallas County Advocate Program	Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc.	The Children's Partnership	Big Brothers Big Sisters; Education is Freedom; Urban League of Greater Dallas and North Central Texas
Justice	County of Bexar Constable Department Pct 4					Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department		
Latino Community Focused					Dallas Concilio of Hispanic Service Organizations			Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
Community Businesses	Tickets4AnyEvent.com	Berry Automotive; WorkForce Solutions; Community National Bank		Work Force Solutions; Teresa's Treasures	Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas; Admiral Construction Company; Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART); La Sima Foundation			Dallas Area Rapid Transit
Government Organizations								City of Dallas; Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce; Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce; Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce

Table 5.4: Key Collaborative Partnerships: Cycle 2 Grantees (Continued)

Partner Type	Harlandale ISD	Pasadena ISD	McAllen ISD	Austin ISD	Plainview ISD	Spring Branch ISD	Palestine ISD	Carrizo Springs CISD
College/ University	Alamo College District	San Jacinto College	South Texas College		South Plains College; Wayland Baptist University	Houston Community College	Trinity Valley Community College	Southwest Texas Junior College; Texas A & M International University
Faith-based Organizations	Methodist Healthcare Ministries					Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church		Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church
Community Nonprofits		Automotive Youth Educational Services		Skill Point Alliance; Communities In Schools (XY Zone)	Prairie House Living Center	Communities in Schools; Junior Achievement	ACCESS	Middle Rio Grande Development Council
Justice							Anderson County Juvenile Detention Center; Anderson County Sheriff's Department	
Latino Community Focused	LULAC National Education Service Center							
Community Businesses	University Health Systems	WorkSource	Workforce Solutions	A+ Federal Credit Union; Workforce Solutions	American State Bank; Apex Collision Center; Burger King; Cargill Meat Solutions; Covenant Hospital Plainview; Hale County State Bank; Wal-Mart	Workforce Solutions; AMEC Paragon	All Star Ford Mercury; Bouquets by Katie; Lowe's Home Improvement; Terry Manufacturing; Tractor Supply Company	Mi Casa Steak House; Botello's Custom Screen Printing; First State Bank; Dixondale Farms
Government Organizations				Austin Housing Authority		Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce; Houston West Chamber of Commerce; National Guard Armory	Palestine Chamber of Commerce	U.S. Border Patrol; City of Carrizo Springs; Dimmit County

Summary

This preliminary evaluation of the Cycle 2 Collaborative grantee applications suggests that many of these Collaborative programs are similar to the Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees in terms of program objectives, the types of services offered, and the types of partnerships formed to support these programs. Further examination is necessary to evaluate the implementation of the Cycle 2 grantees and the effects that the Cycle 2 Collaborative program has upon its stakeholders and participants.

Although baseline demographics on students served by Cycle 2 grantees are not available, key differences have been found in school-level characteristics between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees. Cycle 1 grantee schools appear to have students with more prevalent risk factors for dropping out, including being LEP (16% vs. 9% for Cycle 2), economic disadvantage (88% vs. 69% for Cycle 2), and enrollment in special education (15% vs. 9% for Cycle 2). Moreover, a higher percentage of Cycle 2 grantees operate in suburban areas than Cycle 1 grantees (42% vs. 23%, respectively), and a lower percentage of Cycle 2 grantees operate in urban areas (16% vs. 38%, respectively). However, other differences suggest that students from Cycle 2 schools are not at lower risk for dropout; namely, students from Cycle 2 schools have greater average mobility rates (40% vs. 30% for Cycle 1) and very similar proficiency levels on TAKS math, reading, and science exams. Both cohorts of Collaborative grantees operate in high-risk, high-need areas. Although the evaluation team plans to examine differences in outcomes by grantee cohort, large differences between cohorts are not expected.

6. Impact of the Collaborative Program on Student Outcomes (Cycle 1)

In this section, an overview of the Collaborative's effectiveness on student outcomes is provided. This section addresses Evaluation Objective 2 (*To evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program on student outcomes*) and Evaluation Objective 3 (*To evaluate the impact of the Collaborative program activities on students' career readiness skills*).

This evaluation of the impact of the Collaborative program on student outcomes of Cycle 1 grantees should be considered preliminary. Still, four key sources of data are used to provide a solid first look at the Collaborative program's effects:

- **TAKS Data**: This section is primarily descriptive but includes student-level changes in TAKS proficiency rates on math, reading, and science between the baseline year (2007-08) and the end of the first year of Cycle 1 program implementation (2008-09). Additional analyses examining TAKS more completely will be included in Interim Report #2. As noted in chapter 1, Interim Report #2 will examine additional variables such as dropout, graduation, promotion and course completion.
- **Student Survey Data**: ICF worked with Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees to survey all available students who received services during the 2008-09 school year. This survey covered a range of topics, including future aspirations, school engagement, work status, ethical workplace behaviors, other behavioral data, college/career skills, "customer satisfaction" data on the Collaborative program, and information about the student's perceptions of his/her community. Complete data is available from 249 students, which represents a 27% response rate. Because the student survey was administered by grantees, we were not in a position to study the source of the low response rates. Although this response rate was low, results from a nonresponse analysis (Appendix H) indicate that there were no major systematic differences between respondents and nonrespondents on a variety of characteristics. A list of scales developed from the Student Survey is presented in Appendix I.
- **Collaborative Staff Surveys**: As part of the site visits during the 2008-09 school year to the five Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees that are the subject of this study,[23] the evaluation team asked a range of staff (including principals, grant coordinators, teachers, district administrators, and community partners) to rate the success of the Collaborative program. Data are available from 55 respondents.
- **Case Studies**: The evaluation team conducted site visits during the 2008-09 school year to five Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees. During site visits, the evaluation team interviewed a range of stakeholders both to gain their perceptions of the Collaborative's effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. Where possible, the qualitative data drawn from case studies were used to triangulate and thus strengthen the quantitative findings.

Although the TAKS data provide the core evidence of program effectiveness, the power in this evaluation lies in its mixed-method approach. By triangulating findings, a complete story can be told about whether the Collaborative program is effective, and more importantly, why or why not it is effective, with which students and in what contexts. In this section, two types of analyses are described to determine whether the Collaborative had an effect on student achievement as measured by TAKS:

[23] The sixth grantee, Port Arthur, was excluded from our site visit schedule due to its delayed implementation caused by Hurricane Ike.

- **Descriptive Analyses**: Results from each TAKS exam (i.e., Reading/ELA, Math, and Science) are first described. The percentage of Collaborative students who met TEA standards in each year are presented, and compared to State averages for both all high school students and all at risk high school students in Texas. These data should be considered descriptive (i.e., conclusions cannot be drawn from these data alone) because state averages and even averages for at risk students do not constitute valid comparison groups for the Collaborative. Collaborative grantees had to meet specific eligibility criteria (e.g., 75% or more of a grantee district's students must be economically disadvantaged) which are not typical for other districts in the state. Table 6.1 contains an overview of the percentage of students in Texas who met standards in reading/ELA, math, and science in 2007-08 and 2008-09. This table demonstrates that significant variation in proficiency rates was observed by grade level. The evaluation team derived statewide averages by calculating the Grade 9-12 average proficiency rate for each year and subject, weighted by the number of students in each grade.
- **Statistical Models**: Next, results from a multivariate analysis of student achievement are presented. This analysis, which was conducted using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), has two major advantages over descriptive analyses: (1) by controlling for certain variables [e.g., race, free/reduced lunch], we can isolate the influence of these variables on TAKS performance, and (2) the HLM is a multi-level model, which allows researchers to isolate both student-level and school-level influences on TAKS performance. However, unlike the descriptive analyses, the statistical models do not use a comparison group, so there is no basis to determine what would have happened in the absence of the Collaborative. Comparison groups will be included in the next report.

Table 6.1: Summary of TAKS Statewide Results: Average Percentage of Students Who Met Standards for Reading, Math, and Science, 2007-08 vs. 2008-09

Grade Level	State Average, Reading 2007-08	State Average, Reading 2008-09	State Average, Math 2007-08	State Average, Math 2008-09	State Average, Science 2007-08	State Average, Science 2008-09
8	92%	93%	75%	79%	68%	72%
9	84%	87%	60%	67%	NA	NA
10	86%	88%	63%	65%	64%	66%
Exit Level	90%	92%	79%	81%	80%	85%
State Average: Percentage of Students Who Met Standards (Gr. 9-12 Only)	86.4%	88.8%	66.4%	70.5%	71.4%	75.0%

Source: TEA Statewide TAKS Summary Reports, 2007-08 and 2008-09
NA = Not Applicable (i.e., test not administered or not considered in the analysis)

TAKS Achievement – Descriptive Analyses

TAKS data from the baseline year (2007-08) were compared to data from the end of the first year of Cycle 1 Collaborative implementation (2008-09) for reading, math, and science, without controlling for other student-level and school-level factors. TAKS data were available for both 2007-08 (baseline) and 2008-09 (first year after implementation) for 424 Collaborative students on TAKS math, 414 students on TAKS reading, and 197 students on TAKS science. Altogether, slightly less than half of the students served by the Collaborative had two years of valid TAKS reading and math results, and only 22% of Collaborative students had two years of valid TAKS science results (Table 6.2). Because TAKS science is not administered to grade 9 students, the only high school students that have two years of data for comparison are grade 10 students in 2007-08 who took TAKS science as 11th graders in 2008-09. There were a variety of reasons for missing data (e.g., students were absent or received alternative assessments), but the results provide an initial indication of the effectiveness of the Collaborative program on academic achievement. As mentioned previously, over half of the student sample is from Brownsville, so this grantee's students largely drive the results presented in this section.

Table 6.2: Number of Cycle 1 Collaborative Students with Valid TAKS Data in Both 2007-08 and 2008-09, by Grantee

Grantee Program	TAKS Reading/ELA	TAKS Math	TAKS Science
Project STEPS (San Antonio)	93	97	42
Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (Houston)	44	43	1
College, Career, and Technology Academy (Los Fresnos)	10	20	16
Edgewood ISD Middle College Program (San Antonio)	26	35	31
Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program (Brownsville)	232	220	105
Total	**405**	**415**	**195**
Percentage of Students with Valid TAKS Results	**45.8%**	**47.0%**	**21.6%**

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007-08 and 2008-09; Program identifiers were not available for 9 TAKS reading, 9 TAKS math, and 2 TAKS science scores.

Math Results (descriptive analyses)

Between 2007-08 and 2008-09, Cycle 1 Collaborative students improved in the percentage of students who met standards (Table 6.3). The proportion of students who met TAKS standards in Math increased by 7.3 percentage points, from 42% in 2007-08 to 49% in 2008-09. Despite this appearance of significant improvement, statewide math proficiency rates also increased by 4.1 percentage points among all students in Texas, and by 5.7 percentage points among at risk students. The rate of improvement in TAKS math proficiency rates among Collaborative students significantly outpaced state averages (p<.05), but did not significantly outpace gains among at risk students.

Table 6.3: Summary of TAKS Math Results for Cycle 1 Collaborative Students, 2007-08 vs. 2008-09

	n	Collaborative Students: 2007-08 (SD)	Collaborative Students: 2008-09 (SD)	Collaborative Students: Change from 2007-08 to 2008-09	State Average for All High School Students in Texas	State Average for At Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	424	41.5% (.49)	48.8% (.50)	*+7.3 percentage points*	*+4.1 percentage points**	*+5.7 percentage points*

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007-08 and 2008-09
SD = Standard Deviation
* Difference between Collaborative and statewide average significant at the $p<.05$ level

Reading Results (descriptive analyses)

Table 6.4 presents TAKS reading (grades 8 and 9) and English language arts (grade 10 and exit level) results from 2007-08 to 2008-09. (For consistency, we will refer to both tests as reading.) The percentage of Collaborative students who met standards increased by 3.6 percentage points, from 73% in 2007-08 to 76% in 2008-09. These gains in reading slightly outpaced statewide averages among both all students and at risk students in Texas. However, differences in gain scores were not significant on either comparison.

Table 6.4: Summary of TAKS Reading Results for Cycle 1 Collaborative Students, 2007-08 vs. 2008-09

	n	Collaborative Students: 2007-08 (SD)	Collaborative Students: 2008-09 (SD)	Collaborative Students: Change from 2007-08 to 2008-09	State Average for All High School Students in Texas	State Average for At Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	414	72.7% (.45)	76.3% (.43)	*+3.6 percentage points*	*+2.4 percentage points*	*+2.9 percentage points*

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007-08 and 2008-09
SD = Standard Deviation

Science Results (descriptive analyses)

As shown in Table 6.5, improvements in Collaborative students' TAKS science scale scores outpaced improvements reported across Texas during the same period. The percentage of Collaborative students who met standards in TAKS science increased by 25.9 percentage points, from 32% in 2007-08 to 57% in 2008-09. Improvements in TAKS science proficiency were also reported statewide (+4 percentage points) and among at risk students in Texas (+5 percentage points); however, the rates of improvement among Collaborative students during this period was significantly higher. It is unclear at this time what caused the spike in TAKS science proficiency rates among Collaborative students. Some grantees have programs that focus on technical knowledge (e.g., Los Fresnos' College, Career, and Technology Academy) which may explain this change. It is clear, however, that Collaborative students entered the program with significantly lower proficiency in science than other at risk students in Texas. In 2007-08, 32% of Collaborative students met standards in TAKS science, while the statewide average for at risk high school students was 52%. Both groups improved to 57% proficiency the following year.

Table 6.5: Summary of TAKS Science Results for Collaborative Students for Cycle 1 Grantees, 2007-08 vs. 2008-09

	n	Collaborative Students: 2007-08 (SD)	Collaborative Students: 2008-09 (SD)	Collaborative Students: Change from 2007-08 to 2008-09	State Average for All High School Students in Texas	State Average for At Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	197	31.5% (.46)	57.4% (.49)	*+25.9 percentage points*	*+3.6 percentage points**	*+4.7 percentage points**

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007-08 and 2008-09
SD = Standard Deviation
* Difference between Collaborative and statewide average significant at the $p<.05$ level

Although TAKS achievement results were not yet available at the time of case study site visits in the spring of 2009, program staff were asked to describe any changes in student achievement during program implementation. Staff from all Cycle 1 grantee sites indicated that they had observed improved student grades, some noting that students worked harder and appeared to feel increasingly responsible for their achievement. A School of Excellence in Education staff member noted that approximately 90% of program students completing dual credit courses had received passing grades. It is possible that these improvements in grades were not manifested in TAKS results.

Information gleaned from the qualitative analyses and student surveys may also provide some context for these findings. First, as presented in Chapter 4, Cycle 1 grantees placed a strong emphasis on academics and college preparation. This strong academic focus included tutoring services, dual-credit courses, individual graduation/education plans, credit recovery, and professional development for teachers. Although weak economic conditions (and therefore a lack of paid jobs/internships) may have pushed some programs toward a more academic focus, no grantee staff indicated in the site visit interviews that such a tradeoff was made.

TAKS Achievement – Within Collaborative Statistical Models

This section presents the two sets of statistical models that were used to evaluate the Collaborative program and its effect on participating Cycle 1 students. That is, these analyses examine data within Collaborative students in order to better understand who the program may be impacting. The first and second models examine the characteristics that best predict passing the standards for the TAKS math and reading achievement tests.[24] The third and fourth models examine the school and individual-level characteristics that significantly predict scale scores on the TAKS math and reading exams, controlling for student exam scores in the previous year.[25] (Please see Appendix J for further details about the methodology and for detailed tables of results.)

TAKS Achievement Standard

Within Collaborative students, changes in TAKS math and reading between 2007-08 and 2008-09 were explored in order to assess which characteristics best predicted Cycle 1 student achievement (i.e., met the passing standard). Hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) was used to control for student- and school-level factors in the TAKS reading analysis, but the TAKS math

[24] The TAKS reading exam is administered to 9th graders while the TAKS English Language Arts (ELA) exam is administered to 10th graders and at the exit level. Both of these exams were combined in our analyses, and we use the term "reading" as shorthand for both examinations.
[25] More precisely, the evaluation team conducted a z-score transformation to determine relative improvement in academic performance.

analysis had to employ a simple logistic regression model because the HGLM model did not produce stable results.[26] The reader should keep in mind that the findings presented below are not relative to any comparison group. It is possible that these findings would hold true for a comparison group. It is also possible that the findings presented for the Collaborative group of students represent doing less well or doing better than a comparison group.

In relation to math achievement, there were four significant student-level predictors and one significant school-level predictor of meeting the TAKS math standard. Students who were in Grade 11 and Grade 12 were significantly more likely to pass the TAKS math standard than Grade 9 students, when student and school factors were controlled. Specifically, Grade 11 and 12 students had 3.5 times greater odds of passing the TAKS math standard than the average Grade 9 student. Additionally, students who were in special education had lower odds of passing the TAKS math standard (i.e., 83% less likely) compared to other students, and White students were more likely to pass the TAKS math exam relative to other students. Finally, students who had passed the TAKS math standard the previous year had more than 14 times greater odds of passing TAKS math compared to students who did not pass the TAKS math the previous school year.[27] At the school level, students who attended charter schools had 4.9 greater odds of passing the TAKS math standard than students in non-charter schools.

In relation to reading achievement, there were two significant student-level predictors of passing the reading TAKS standard. Students in special education were significantly less likely to pass the TAKS reading standard compared to other students. Specifically, special education students decreased their odds of passing the TAKS reading standard by 77%. Students who passed the TAKS reading standard the previous year had almost 8 times greater odds of passing the TAKS reading standard compared to students who did not pass TAKS reading the previous school year.

TAKS Achievement Scale Scores

Math and reading TAKS differences between all of the students who participated in Cycle 1 of the Collaborative program were explored in order to assess which characteristics best predicted scale scores. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was used in the analysis to control for student- and school-level factors. (See Appendix J for detailed results.)

In relation to math achievement, there were four significant student-level predictors of achievement on the TAKS math exam, as measured by scale scores. Students in Grade 10 and Grade 12 were significantly less likely to score as high on their TAKS math exam scores than Grade 9 students, when student and school factors (including prior year performance) were controlled. Special education students were significantly less likely to score as well as other students on the TAKS math exam, while students who scored highly on the TAKS math exam in the previous school year were significantly more likely to score highly on the TAKS math exam the following year. None of the school-level predictors were significant.

In relation to reading achievement, there were two significant student-level predictors of achievement on the TAKS reading exam. Controlling for student and school factors, LEP students did not score as well on their TAKS reading exam scores as other students. Students who scored highly on the TAKS reading exam in the previous school year were significantly more likely to score highly on the TAKS reading exam the following year. There were no significant school-level predictors of achievement in TAKS reading.

[26] More precisely, the HGLM model did not converge. This occurs when the mean changes significantly in different iterations of the model.

[27] It is to be expected that prior passing would be associated with future passing, although it is hoped that programs such as Collaborative will help improve the odds of students who have had a prior failure.

Across subjects and analyses, factors most likely to predict success on TAKS appear to be performance the previous year. Special education students were consistently associated with lower achievement.

Career Readiness

Four primary measures of career readiness were assessed as part of this evaluation: (1) students' technical knowledge, (2) ethical workplace behaviors, (3) leadership skills, and (4) oral and written communications skills. To evaluate these measures, the team drew from data collected through the Stakeholder Survey (55 respondents) and the Student Survey (249 respondents). Neither of these surveys' respondents can be considered representative of the Collaborative as a whole. The Stakeholder Survey was drawn from a convenience sample of Collaborative staff and partners who were interviewed during spring 2009 site visits, and the Student Survey had a 27% response rate. Still, these findings are instructive and provide important context for evaluation findings.

Students' Technical Knowledge

Table 6.6 presents responses to a question posted on the Cycle 1 stakeholder survey: How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' technological knowledge? Two-thirds of respondents indicated that the program they are associated with was somewhat or very successful in this area, while 16% of respondents were neutral. One respondent indicated that the program was unsuccessful in increasing technical knowledge.

Staff from the case study sites tended in general to report that their programs offered ample opportunities for students to improve their technological literacy, including software training courses and online program components. However, staff across all five sites had difficulty identifying clear indicators of enhanced technological knowledge or skill. In fact, students from the Brownsville site were reportedly more proficient than had been expected: The site's university partner reported that they modified their computer curriculum because participating students had more knowledge and experience than they had anticipated.

Table 6.6: Cycle 1 Staff Survey: How Successful has the Collaborative Program Been in Increasing Participating Students' Technological Knowledge?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	15	27.3%
Somewhat Successful	21	38.2%
Neutral	9	16.4%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	1	1.8%
Don't Know	9	16.4%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Cycle 1 stakeholder survey respondents were also asked to rate how successful the Collaborative has been at increasing participating students' ethical workplace behaviors (Table 6.7). On average, respondents thought the grant program was more effective in improving ethical workplace behaviors than technological knowledge. Whereas almost 66% of respondents thought that the Collaborative program was successful in improving technological knowledge, 80% of respondents thought the program was successful in improving ethical workplace behaviors. No respondents

thought that the program was unsuccessful, and 20% of respondents were either neutral or felt that they didn't have a strong enough basis to answer the question.

Table 6.7: Cycle 1 Staff Survey: How Succe7sful has the Collaborative Program Been in Increasing Participating Students' Ethical Workplace Behaviors?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	20	36.4%
Somewhat Successful	24	43.6%
Neutral	5	9.1%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Don't Know	6	10.9%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Table 6.8 includes Cycle 1 Collaborative students' self-reported positive workplace ethics. Although there are no baseline data to determine how much these behaviors have changed in the past year, they are nonetheless an interesting snapshot of how students in the Collaborative behave in the workplace. About 30% of Collaborative students had a job in the month prior to the survey's administration in April 2009. In the table, each positive behavior is followed by the number of times these working students had engaged in that behavior in the past month. With the exception of "scheduling meetings with my boss to assess my progress on the job", more than half of Collaborative students who were employed engaged in each type of positive behavior at least once in the past month.

Table 6.8: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Self-Reported Positive Workplace Ethics in the Previous Month

Statement	Never	1-3 Times	4-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times	Not Applicable (did not work)
Volunteered for extra work	10.6%	**11.8%**	5.7%	1.2%	0.8%	69.9%
Stayed late to work on a task that really needed to be done	10.9%	**13.0%**	4.9%	0.8%	1.2%	69.2%
On my own initiative, I learned how to do something to help my company	11.4%	**14.3%**	3.3%	0.4%	0.4%	70.2%
Worked overtime for my company, even when I was not scheduled to work	**14.6%**	8.5%	5.3%	0.8%	0.8%	69.9%
Scheduled meetings with my boss to assess my progress in my job	**19.5%**	8.1%	2.0%	0.4%	0.0%	69.9%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response. Approximately 70% of respondents did not work in the month prior to survey administration; therefore the percentages in the first five columns represent responses from students who did work.

The program component designed to inculcate ethical work behaviors was, according to the site coordinator for Houston ISD, the weakest aspect of that site's overall program. However, staff from all five case study sites noted that students were attending more closely to the relationship between their appearance (i.e., clothing, tattoos, etc.) and the ways in which others perceived them. Staff from Edgewood and Brownsville reported either that they had observed appropriate behaviors or that they had received no complaints about student behavior.

Table 6.9 includes a list of negative workplace behaviors and student responses to how many times they engaged in the listed behavior in the past month. Of the students who were employed, over two-thirds reported that they never engaged in each negative behavior in the past month, and when students did report negative workplace behaviors, they tended to be infrequent (or isolated) incidents. The negative behavior most prevalent was intentionally arriving late to work: among students who were employed in the past month, about one in five Collaborative students arrived late at least once.

Table 6.9: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Self-Reported Negative Workplace Ethics

Statement	Never	1-3 Times	4-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times	Not Applicable (did not work)
Intentionally arrived late for work	**22.4%**	6.1%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	70.2%
Called in sick when I was not really sick	**24.0%**	5.3%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	69.9%
Bent the rules in dealing with someone (e.g., gave friend employee discount)	**24.0%**	4.9%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	69.9%
Left work early without permission	**27.2%**	2.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	69.9%
Played games on the computer during work hours	**27.6%**	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	69.5%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response.

Students' Leadership Skills

Table 6.10 presents stakeholder perceptions of the effectiveness of the Collaborative program in improving students' leadership skills. Eighty percent of respondents thought that the program was successful in improving students' leadership skills, and none of the respondents thought the program had been unsuccessful in this area.

Table 6.10: Cycle 1 Staff Survey: How Successful has the Collaborative Program Been in Increasing Participating Students' Leadership Skills?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	16	29.1%
Somewhat Successful	28	50.9%
Neutral	6	10.9%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Don't Know	5	9.1%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Staff from all five case study sites indicated that student leadership skills were emerging among some participating students. For example, an Edgewood staff member reported that a student had taken responsibility for organizing a clothing drive for needy families. Students at all five sites were offered opportunities to enhance their leadership experiences and skills. Through Houston ISD's student tutoring program, for instance, students were provided ongoing opportunities to serve as responsible role models for the elementary students they serve. At a Brownsville alternative high school, staff reported that students were organized into "platoons," leadership for which is rotated

so that each student assumes responsibility for the group at some point throughout the academic year.

Additionally, the program implemented by Houston ISD appears to have produced benefits in the leadership domain in school and at home. A student tutoring program, the Houston ISD effort hired students at risk of dropping out to tutor elementary school pupils. Student tutors received pedagogical training and support, maintained a journal about their experiences, and were evaluated regularly. In addition to assuming responsibility for tutoring younger children, the student tutors received payment for their services and were able to contribute financially to their families, many of whom were low income. Thus, participating student tutors were able to contribute materially to their families' well-being.

Students' Oral and Written Communication Skills

Table 6.11 presents stakeholder perceptions on whether the Collaborative program was successful in improving students' oral and written communications skills. From student survey results, which will be presented later, this appears to be one of the weaker links in the program, and this was corroborated by stakeholder survey results. Although 75% of respondents indicated that the program was at least somewhat successful in improving oral and written communications skills, only one in five respondents indicated that the Collaborative program was very successful in this area. Approximately 25% of respondents were neutral or had no opinion.

Table 6.11: Cycle 1 Staff Survey: How Successful has the Collaborative Program Been in Increasing Participating Students' Oral and Written Communications Skills?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	11	20.0%
Somewhat Successful	30	54.5%
Neutral	8	14.5%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Don't Know	6	10.9%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Reports of improved student oral and written communication skills varied across the five case study sites. Oral communication had improved at the Houston ISD site, according to staff, whereas staff at the School of Excellence in Education reported that student writing skills were stronger. Staff of Los Fresnos said that previously reticent students were far more verbal, confident, and even "professional" in their presentation. Staff of Brownsville reported that improvements in student communication were noticeable, but those of Edgewood indicated that improvements were modest.

Other Outcomes

Stakeholder Survey Results

Table 6.12 contains an overview of stakeholder survey responses, by the respondent's position. It is evident from the table that because ICF's site visits were designed to interview as many stakeholders as possible, teachers and community partners were over-represented in the results simply because there were typically many teachers and community partners involved in the Collaborative at a given school, while there was typically one principal, grant coordinator, and district administrator.

Table 6.12: Staff Survey Responses, by Position for Cycle 1 Grantees

Respondent's Position	n	%
Teacher	27	49.1%
Community Partner	15	27.3%
District Administrator	6	10.9%
Principal/Vice Principal	4	7.3%
Grant Coordinator	3	5.5%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Overall Perceived Effectiveness of the Collaborative Program

When asked to rate the overall effectiveness of the Collaborative program, the overwhelming majority of respondents considered it at least a partial success (Table 6.13). Even more telling, no respondents considered the Collaborative program unsuccessful, or even somewhat unsuccessful. Approximately 11% of respondents were neutral or had no judgment of the overall success of the program. Despite the barriers and challenges faced by Collaborative grantees (as noted in Chapter 4), it is apparent that successes have also been had.

Table 6.13: Cycle 1 Staff Survey: How Would You Rate the Overall Success of the Collaborative Program?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	25	45.5%
Somewhat Successful	24	43.6%
Neutral	3	5.5%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Don't Know	3	5.5%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Stakeholders were also asked to rate the success of the Collaborative program in reducing the dropout rate among students (Table 6.14). While official dropout data are not available at the time of this report, this question was used as an opportunity to gauge any early indications of success or failure. Clearly, stakeholders perceive Collaborative as having an effect on dropout rates. More than 75% of respondents indicate that the Collaborative has been somewhat or very successful in decreasing the dropout rate among participating students. No respondents indicated that the program had been unsuccessful in this area; however, 22% of respondents were unsure or neutral, indicating that at least some stakeholders were reserving judgment early in the program.

Program staff from case study sites likewise tended to report that they expected dropout rates to decrease. They based this expectation on the increased credit recovery they had observed among participating students. Additionally, case study data suggest that students' self-efficacy increased. Interviewed participants noted that students' behavior improved during the course of the school year and the students seemed prouder.

Table 6.14: Cycle 1 Grantee Staff Survey: How Successful Has the Collaborative Program Been in Decreasing the Dropout Rate among Participating Students?

Response	n	%
Very Successful	21	38.2%
Somewhat Successful	22	40.0%
Neutral	6	10.9%
Somewhat Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Unsuccessful	0	0.0%
Don't Know	6	10.9%
Total	**55**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Stakeholder Surveys

Collaborative Students' Experiences in the Program

To get a different perspective, Cycle 1 Collaborative students were asked directly about their experiences with the program and whether they considered it to be effective (249 students responded to the survey, for a response rate of 27%). Table 6.15 presents a list of potential outcomes of the Collaborative program that, collectively, are indicators whether students are college and career ready. Responses are sorted in rough order by how much the Collaborative has contributed to each indicator, and the most common response is presented in bold text. The 249 respondents to the Collaborative student survey indicated that attending class regularly, preparing for college, using computers/other technology, and learning on one's own were the areas where the Collaborative program provided the most help. Areas where the Collaborative was perceived as being least effective include: making the community a better place, writing effectively, and speaking effectively. Put another way, the Collaborative is perceived by students as being most effective in handling truancy and preparing students for college. It is perceived by students as being least effective in developing oral and written communications skills.

Table 6.15: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

How Much Collaborative Has Contributed To…	Very Little	Some	Quite a Bit	Very Much
Attending class regularly	10.2%	18.3%	28.5%	**43.0%**
Preparing for college	13.7%	24.8%	23.1%	**38.5%**
Learning on your own	11.5%	27.7%	26.0%	**34.9%**
Using computers and/or other technology	17.0%	27.2%	23.0%	**32.8%**
Thinking critically	12.4%	30.8%	**31.6%**	25.2%
Developing career goals	10.3%	**31.6%**	27.4%	30.8%
Working well with others	14.9%	**31.1%**	23.8%	30.2%
Learning leadership skills	12.0%	**37.3%**	23.6%	27.0%
Developing personal values	12.0%	**33.8%**	28.6%	25.6%
Solving real-world problems	17.1%	**32.1%**	27.4%	23.5%
Speaking effectively	18.8%	**33.8%**	27.4%	20.1%
Making your community a better place	27.5%	**34.8%**	18.9%	18.9%
Learning work-related skills	17.6%	**37.3%**	26.6%	18.5%
Writing effectively	22.6%	**34.0%**	29.8%	13.6%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response.

With the exception of "making the community a better place", at least three-quarters of Collaborative students thought that the program was helping them at least a bit. This is a positive – but preliminary – indication that the Collaborative program is making a difference with students.

Future Plans/Aspirations

Another measure of the Collaborative program's success is whether students have higher educational or career aspirations (Table 6.16). Although the Collaborative student survey was not administered at baseline – and therefore there is no yardstick to estimate student perceptions before the beginning of the program – the evaluation team expects that next year's survey data will provide a valuable indication of whether the program is providing students with the skills needed to ensure they are college and career ready.

Table 6.16: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Plans After Graduating from High School

Plans	n	%
4-Year College or University	132	53.0%
2-Year College or University	53	21.3%
Work	32	12.9%
Military	26	10.4%
Apprenticeship	0	0.0%
Time Off	3	1.2%
Undecided	18	7.2%
Other	10	4.0%
Total	**249**	**100%***

Source: Collaborative Student Survey
* Percentages add up to more than 100% because students could choose multiple plans for the future.

It is evident from Table 6.16 that Collaborative students had high educational aspirations. Three out of four students indicated that they plan to attend college after graduating from high school, and over half of respondents are planning to attend a four-year college. Students' educational aspirations differ markedly between sites. For example, the percentage of students who plan to attend a four-year college is 46% in Los Fresnos, 70% in Houston, 52% in Brownsville, 7% in Edgewood, and 83% in the School of Excellence in Education. Students with the highest educational aspirations tend to be in programs that focus, not surprisingly, on academic achievement, with the exception of Edgewood, which was based on a small sample (and over half of Edgewood students plan to attend a two-year college).

Interview data from the five case studies likewise suggest that students are more interested in pursuing post-secondary education than they had appeared to prior to program involvement. Some program staff attributed this to their program's focus on supporting financial aid application, college selection, and preparation—particularly for those students whose parents had not attended college themselves.

Student Engagement

Cycle 1 Collaborative student survey results covering attitudes toward academics are presented in Table 6.17. These questions provide insight into students' perceptions of self-efficacy[28] and engagement in school, which are both predictors of academic success (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). However, since the student survey was administered once in April 2009, it is impossible to determine how much students' attitudes and behaviors changed since joining the Collaborative, especially given the 27% response rate. Results presented in the table indicate that Collaborative students have a good sense of self-efficacy, which may or may not be attributable to the presence of the Collaborative. At least three in four students agree that they have the skills and abilities to complete their work; believe it is important to get good grades, feel accepted, and have a positive adult influence. Student apathy appears to be the

[28] Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capability to perform in circumstances that exercise influence over events in their lives.

greatest challenge, as less than one in five students strongly agree that they have opportunities to be creative, they are challenged in school, and they are excited about their classes.

Table 6.17: Cycle1 Collaborative Students' Attitudes Toward Academics (Student Self-Efficacy)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think it is important to make good grades	2.4%	1.2%	6.9%	37.5%	**52.0%**
There is at least one adult in my school who cares about me and knows me well	4.4%	6.9%	13.3%	32.7%	**42.7%**
I think the things I learn at school are useful	2.4%	4.8%	16.9%	**42.3%**	33.5%
I have the skills and abilities to complete my work	2.4%	1.6%	11.3%	**52.2%**	32.4%
Overall, people at school accept me for who I am	1.2%	2.8%	16.9%	**49.2%**	29.8%
I care about my school	3.2%	4.4%	21.0%	**44.0%**	27.4%
I put forth a great deal of effort when doing my school work	1.2%	4.5%	23.9%	**47.0%**	23.5%
My school work makes me curious to learn about other things	4.0%	5.6%	23.0%	**45.6%**	21.8%
I have worked harder than I expected to work in school	2.4%	8.6%	26.9%	**42.4%**	19.2%
I have opportunities to be creative in my school assignments	2.4%	6.5%	25.6%	**46.3%**	19.1%
I feel safe in school	4.0%	8.5%	27.4%	**41.5%**	18.5%
I am challenged to do my best work at school	2.8%	4.0%	21.9%	**53.8%**	17.4%
In general, I am excited about my classes	3.7%	11.0%	35.0%	**36.6%**	13.8%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response.

Table 6.18 presents other indicators of student engagement collected via the Collaborative Student Survey. In general, it appears that Collaborative students were engaged in class, as almost 90% of Collaborative students participated in class discussions, and over 90% of students at least occasionally asked questions during class and worked with other students during class. Over half of Collaborative students worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments, and more than half of survey respondents also indicated that they have tutored other students outside of class time.

Table 6.18: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Engagement in School

Statement	Not at All	Sometimes	Always
I completed my homework	11.0%	**55.1%**	33.9%
I worked with other students on assignments during class	7.0%	**61.1%**	32.0%
I asked questions in class	8.6%	**62.4%**	29.0%
I participated in class discussions	12.7%	**60.7%**	26.6%
I studied for tests/quizzes/exams	17.1%	**59.2%**	23.7%
I worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments	41.2%	**48.6%**	10.3%
I helped/tutored other students who were in my class	45.9%	**47.1%**	7.0%
I skipped class	43.9%	**48.8%**	7.0%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response.

Behaviors

Table 6.19 includes an overview of students' self-reported behaviors. Most negative behaviors were reported relatively infrequently, with the exception of cheating on a test/exam. Almost one-third of students admit to cheating, and this measure will continue to be explored in the future. Considering that the Collaborative program is designed in part to improve ethical behaviors, the program may already be tackling this issue. About one in five students reported that they have been suspended from school since joining the Collaborative program, and about one in seven students reported being in a physical altercation. Four students reported that they were suspended more than 20 times since joining the Collaborative. These data appear suspect, but we cannot rule out the possibility that these are valid data.

Table 6.19: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Self-Reported Behaviors Since Joining the Collaborative Program (2008-09 School Year)

Statement	Never	1-3 Times	4-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times
I cheated on a test or exam	**68.0%**	24.9%	3.3%	0.8%	2.9%
I received a school suspension	**81.3%**	14.1%	2.5%	0.4%	1.7%
I tried to hit or get into a physical fight with another person(s)	**84.5%**	11.7%	2.1%	0.8%	0.8%
I intentionally damaged private property	**92.5%**	6.2%	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%
I shoplifted minor articles (e.g., cigarettes, magazines, clothes)	**93.3%**	5.9%	0.4%	0.0%	0.4%
I hid a firearm or knife on my person while outside my home	**93.3%**	4.2%	2.1%	0.0%	0.4%
I shoplifted major articles (e.g., over $100 in value)	**97.1%**	2.5%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response.

Table 6.20 reports how Collaborative students spend their time. Students were asked on the Collaborative Student Survey to indicate how many hours per week they spend on certain activities. Overall, Collaborative students divide their time between school, work, and what appear to be active social schedules. The largest amount of time spent by Collaborative students was on socializing with friends (5.2 hours per week), watching television (4.2 hours per week), and talking on the phone (3.8 hours per week). Students averaged three hours of work per week; however, it should be noted that roughly 30% of Collaborative students had jobs. Therefore, among the students who are employed, work consumes a much larger percentage of their time.

Table 6.20: Average Number of Hours per Week Spent by Cycle 1 Collaborative Students on Selected Activities

Activity	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hanging Out/Socializing With Friends Outside of School	243	5.2	3.3
Watching Television	246	4.2	3.2
Talking on the Phone	249	3.8	3.4
Exercising	247	3.4	3.2
Chatting or Surfing Online	246	3.2	3.1
Working for Pay	241	3.0	3.6
Preparing for Class	246	2.4	2.3
Participating in School-Sponsored Activities	244	1.7	2.8
Doing Volunteer Work	247	1.5	2.4
Playing Video Games	247	1.4	2.3
Internship/Unpaid Work	240	0.9	2.0

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)

Collaborative Students' Perceptions of Their Neighborhood

Cycle 1 Collaborative students generally had a positive perception of their neighborhood (Table 6.21). Although less than half of respondents indicated that crime, substance abuse, vandalism, and run-down housing was "never a problem", less than 10% of students indicated that these problems were always present. It is unclear whether students simply become acclimated to their environment and accept problems as normal, or whether these issues are truly minor in Collaborative districts. Given the risk factors presented earlier on Collaborative districts and schools, there is good reason to believe it may be the former.

Table 6.21: Cycle 1 Collaborative Students' Perceptions of Their Neighborhood

Perception of Problems in Student's Neighborhood	Never a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem	Don't Know
Crime (muggings, robberies, etc.)	**38.4%**	34.7%	8.7%	5.4%	12.8%
People selling or using drugs	**41.6%**	15.6%	9.5%	9.5%	23.9%
People drinking alcohol in public	**41.9%**	23.7%	9.5%	10.0%	14.9%
Vandalism (e.g., graffiti, broken street lights)	**45.5%**	24.8%	10.7%	5.8%	13.2%
Housing and property not being kept up	**47.3%**	19.3%	5.3%	2.9%	25.1%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey, 2009 (*n*=249)
Responses in bold indicate the most common response.

Summary of the Collaborative Program Outcomes

This chapter examined the effects of the Collaborative program on students in terms of several important programmatic outcomes, including academic achievement, career readiness, and other reported outcomes. In terms of academic achievement, Collaborative students improved in proficiency rates in TAKS math, reading, and science; however, only science outcomes significantly outpaced state averages. When student- and school-level characteristics were controlled in the analyses of academic performance, students who were in special education programs tended to perform more poorly in academics than other students, and students that performed well in 2007-08 were much more likely to perform well in 2008-09. No relationship was found between the number of hours of service received and academic outcomes.

Additionally, students gave high ratings to the Collaborative program on preparing them for college, improving classroom attendance, increasing computer knowledge, and encouraging them to learn on their own and think critically. These student surveys were confirmed by interviews with key staff stakeholders who reported that students tended to get better grades, work harder, and feel an increased responsibility for their achievements due to the Collaborative program.

In relation to career readiness, among the Collaborative staff and stakeholders, 80% reported that the Collaborative program was successfully impacting students' ethnical workplace behaviors. Students tended to confirm this finding. More than half of the surveyed students who were employed reported engaging in positive workplace behaviors in the past month (e.g., staying late to work on a task that really needed to be done). Conversely, more than two-thirds of the students reported that they did not engage in negative workplace behaviors in the past month (e.g., intentionally arriving late for work). Additionally, during site visits, program staff related stories about students taking an increased interest in improving their appearances at work (e.g., clothing, hiding tattoos, etc.), which could indicate students' increased interest in performing at work.

Further, Collaborative staff reported observing improvements in other student outcomes, including student leadership, written and oral communication skills, and student participation in school. Students tended to agree that the Collaborative was a positive influence across these categories;

however, given that these results are from a post survey, changes in attitudes and behaviors cannot be measured since students joined the Collaborative.

7. Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability of the Collaborative

This section includes findings from the analysis of data on cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative program, based mostly on data collected from Collaborative Cycle 1 grantees. This section addresses Evaluation Objective 4: *To determine the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative program.*

Eligible Use of Funds

Through Cycle 1 of the Collaborative, eligible school districts and open enrollment charter schools could receive grants of up to $250,000 to implement their programs or initiatives. Grantees were required to serve a minimum of 20 students, and grant funds could be used for expenses in the budget categories of payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, and capital outlay. Specific allowable expenditures include:

- Hiring a lead education staff member (coordinator) to provide guidance and outreach, and to serve as a liaison between schools and partners.
- Funding extra duty pay for staff involved in after-school activities related to the purpose of the grant.
- Purchasing equipment or materials necessary for student participation in an internship program or dropout reduction and recovery activities.
- Providing incentives to students for completing an internship or employment program.
- Providing students with nutritional snacks during after-school or weekend activities.
- Transporting students to and from internships, employment programs, or collaborative activities.
- Sponsoring educational field trips and college visits.
- Matching costs of facilities provided by outside organizations for program use.

Funds from the Collaborative grant cannot be expended on certain program costs, including the salaries or extra duty pay of district or campus administrators; furniture; equipment, computers, or computer software not shown to be necessary for program implementation; debt service; or indirect costs.

The Collaborative grant requires a 10% match from collaborating partners. This match can be in the form of in-kind donations or cash, and must be made for allowable costs only from non-federal sources. If a match is not provided for the required amount or greater, TEA and the grantee will reduce the total amount of grant funds available for the program (TEA, 2008b).

During Cycle 1 (2007-2009), six grantees were awarded an average of $226,578 each, an overall total of $1,359,468, to implement the Collaborative. Due to delays in program implementation, however, only five grantees have been included in the cost analysis. Port Arthur Independent School District has been removed from the analysis due to significant delays in implementation caused by Hurricane Ike, but was permitted by TEA to serve students in the 2009-10 school year.

Grantees were required to complete a cost section in the grant application detailing how the funds would be allocated. Each of the overall budget categories included several subcategories, which are outlined in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Budget Categories and Corresponding Subcategories

Major Budget Category	Subcategory
Payroll Costs	• Academic • Direct Program Management/Administration • Auxiliary & Other • Substitute Pay • Professional Staff Extra-Duty Pay • Support Staff Extra Duty Pay • Employee Benefits • Tuition Remission (Allowable only for IHEs) • Other
Professional and Contracted Services	• Legal Services • Professional/Consulting Services • Staff or Student Tuition • Education Service Center Services • Contracted Maintenance and Repair of Equipment • Utilities • Rental/Lease Equipment • Miscellaneous Contracted Services • Other
Supplies and Materials	• Maintenance and/or Operations, Supplies and Materials • Textbooks and Other Reading Materials • Testing Materials • District Food Service • General Supplies and Materials • Hardware and Equipment Not Capitalized • Other
Other Operating Costs	• Travel and Subsistence • Insurance Costs • Student Incentives • Miscellaneous Operating Costs • Other
Capital Outlay	• Equipment, Vehicles, or Software • Capital Assets • Library Books and Library Media (Catalogued and Controlled by Library) • Other

Source: Texas Education Agency, Collaborative Dropout Reduction Cycle 1 Request for Application (RFA)

Table 7.2 provides information regarding both budgeted and expended grant funds for the first nine months of the grant performance period (September 2008 through May 2009). The five Cycle 1 grantees analyzed were awarded, on average, approximately $225,995 each, totaling $1,129,975. As of Spring 2009, grantees spent an average of $85,554 of their grant awards, or 38% of the total award amount. As 41% of the grant performance period has passed (9 of 22 months), this figure suggests that Cycle 1 Collaborative grantee spending is on track when compared to their grant award amounts.

Table 7.2: Comparison of Average Program Allocations to Average Program Expenditures for Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantees

Budget Category	Total Average Amount (Grant) (N=5)			Total Average Amount (Match) (N=5)		
	Allocated	Spent	% Spent	Allocated	Spent	% Spent
Payroll Costs	$99,263	$28,970	29.2%	$19,040	$18,080	95.0%
Professional and Contracted Services	$91,834	$41,804	45.5%	$74,600	59,543	79.8%
Supplies and Materials	$14,339	$4,414	30.8%	$0	$9,600	---
Other Operating Costs	$10,945	$772	7.1%	$0	$0	N/A
Capital Outlay	$9,614	$9,584	99.7%	$0	$0	N/A
Total Costs:	**$225,995**	**$85,554**	**37.9%**	**$93,640**	**$87,222**	**93.1%**

Source: Cycle 1 grant applications and Cycle 1 expenditure reporting forms, as submitted to Texas Education Agency
Note: Project Period is August 1, 2008 through May 31, 2010; Expenditure Reporting Period is August 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009[29]

Allocated Funds Compared to Actual Expenditures to Date (Cycle 1 Grantees)

A review of the Cycle 1 grant applications showed that the majority of grantees budgeted funds toward payroll and professional/contracted services. Payroll funds were allocated to support the hiring of project coordinators, tutors, college assistants, community liaisons, and counselors, among others. They were also allocated for substitute pay, employee benefits, and professional staff extra-duty pay. Professional and contracted services funds were budgeted for use on probation officers, teachers/facilitators, student recovery services, job shadowing/internships, mentors, referrals to social services, and drug/gang prevention services. Funds budgeted for general supplies and materials were meant to be used on pens/pencils, notebooks, and career/job fair events, while funds relating to miscellaneous operating costs included transportation for participants beyond the regular school day, food/refreshments, and awards for recognition.

At the time expenditures were reported (i.e., April 30, 2009), 41% of the grant period had elapsed. As indicated in Table 7.2, Collaborative grantees had expended almost all of their budgeted funds for capital outlays, and they were slightly ahead on spending for professional and contracted services. All other service categories (payroll, supplies and materials, and other operating costs) have been slightly behind on spending. When matching funds are put into the equation, Collaborative grantees have spent 39.8% of the budgeted amount for payroll costs and 60.9% of the budgeted amount for professional and contracted services.

Matched funds are also detailed in Table 7.2. The amount of total matched funds spent relative to the total budgeted amount is over 90%. However, this amount may exceed the allocated amount by

[29] Grantees were asked to complete an expenditure reporting form to indicate the actual dollars spent (but not necessarily drawn down from TEA's ISAS system) between August 1, 2008 and April 30, 2009 (9 out of 22 months of the grant performance period).

the end of the grant; some budget categories, such as Supplies and Materials for example, had no budgeted match but matched funds were reported as being expended during this reporting period.

Planned Expenditures for Cycle 2 Grantees

Table 7.3 provides an overview of each Cycle 2 Collaborative grantee's budget, along with their matching funds. Labor accounted for a large proportion of the grant funding, totaling over half of all the budgeted expenditures. Supplies and materials had the second largest proportion of grant funding, followed by other expenditures and contracted services, respectively. Altogether, $3,886,053 in grants were awarded for the Collaborative Cycle 2 grantees, and grantees contributed an additional $833,716 in matching funds to bring the total expected expenditures for this program over $4.72 million. Some of the grantees even exceeded the matching requirement. In fact, Austin ISD and Dallas ISD almost doubled their funding through matching.

Table 7.3: Planned Expenditures and Matched Funds for Cycle 2 Grantees

Grantee Name	Labor	Contracted Services	Supplies and Materials	Other	Grant Amount	Matching Funds	Total Funding
Austin ISD	$174,596	$60,795	$5,968	$8,640	$249,999	$211,784	**$461,783**
Carrizo Springs CISD	$92,759	$23,000	$32,000	$85,000	$237,500	$25,000	**$262,500**
Corsicana ISD	$100,698	$14,000	$48,679	$11,400	$174,777	$17,500	**$192,277**
Dallas ISD	$128,558	$5,362	$27,500	$68,580	$250,000	$226,232	**$476,232**
Dallas Can! Charter Academy	$181,000	$47,500	$10,500	$11,000	$250,000	$30,000	**$280,000**
Del Valle ISD	$85,621	$0	$157,379	$7,000	$250,000	$30,000	**$280,000**
Everman ISD	$128,800	$43,860	$63,855	$7,975	$250,000	$27,000	**$277,000**
George Gervin Charter Academy	$201,105	$0	$24,554	$24,341	$250,000	$25,000	**$275,000**
Harlandale ISD	$150,137	$7,000	$42,913	$48,800	$248,850	$48,500	**$297,000**
McAllen ISD	$193,595	$0	$26,877	$4,500	$224,927	$25,000	**$249,927**
Palestine ISD	$76,800	$20,500	$60,126	$28,324 + $64,250 capital outlay	$250,000	$29,400	**$279,400**
Pasadena ISD	$149,670	$30,000	$57,830	$0	$250,000	$60,350	**$310,350**
Plainview ISD	$32,402	$45,000	$64,698	$107,900	$250,000	$27,950	**$277,950**
San Antonio ISD	$19,592	$195,054	$0	$2,010 + $28,786 Capital Outlay	$250,000	$25,000	**$275,000**
Snyder ISD	$158,000	$8,000	$57,500	$14,000	$250,000	$30,000	**$280,000**
Spring Branch ISD	$205,243	$21,203	$3,450	$20,104	$250,000	$25,000	**$275,000**

Source: Cycle 2 grant applications, as submitted to Texas Education Agency

Cost Effectiveness of Cycle 1 Grantees

Table 7.4 details the programmatic cost per student for the grantees; it also provides an estimate of cost based on various numbers of students served throughout the grant period.

Table 7.4: Comparison of Budgeted and Actual Program Cost Per Student for Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantees

Item	Allocated/Planned	Actuals to Date
Total Grant Funds	$1,129,975	$427,720
Grant Award/ Reporting Period	August 1, 2008 - May 31, 2010 (22 months)	August 1, 2008 - April 30, 2009 (9 months)
# of Students Served	1,355	913
Cost per student, if number of students served is:		
1,355	$834	$316
1,200	$942	$356
1,100	$1,027	$389
913	$1,238	$468

Source: Cycle 1 grant applications and expenditure reporting forms, and Fall/Spring Uploads.

The five Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees planned to serve 1,355 students during the program implementation period; this number ranged from 80 to 500 students per program. This translates into an approximate average budgeted cost of $834 per student over the 22-month grant award period. In actuality, grantees have served a total of 913 students during the first nine months of the grant award period (through April 30, 2009) and have expended a total of $427,720 during this reporting period, which means that the actual program cost per student was $468 during the 2008-09 school year.

Table 7.4 illustrates the projected cost per student at four different levels ranging from the current number of students served to the planned number of students served. Hypothetically, if grantees had planned to serve the number of students that they are actually serving (*N*=913) then the total allocated cost per student would have been $1,238, which is 1.5 times the money they planned to spend initially per student. So, in order for grantees to get closer to the allocated $834 per student, they either need to serve more students in the last 13 months of the grant project period, or they need to spend less funds during that period.

It is important to keep in mind that the cost data are preliminary data and that grantees will report final expenditures by June 30, 2010, at which time a more comprehensive picture of average actual expenditures as compared to average allocated amounts for each category can be illustrated. Additionally, the final expenditures will allow for an expanded analysis of the cost per student and ultimately link the cost per student to program outcomes.

Sustainability Planning

All six Collaborative Cycle 1 grantees addressed sustainability in their grant applications, and a summary of these plans is presented in Table 7.5. Three of the five grantees plan to pursue sustainability strategies focused on local efforts while two grantees (Los Fresnos and Edgewood) plan to pursue a combination of local and state support. As evaluation data become available on the Collaborative grantees, the nature of these efforts may very well change, depending upon the results of the study.

Table 7.5: Sustainability Planning Initiatives Undertaken by Collaborative Cycle 1 Grantees

School of Excellence in Education	Marketing plan to raise community awareness.
Los Fresnos CISD	Financial sustainability will occur through new re-enrolled counts for state ADA reimbursements, career and technology education (CATE) funding streams, and district commitment to efforts.
Houston ISD	The Department of Student Engagement will seek budgetary commitments from campuses, regional offices and other district sources; Funds from Title I, Title III, Title IV, Title V, High School Allotment and re-grouped ADA funds from increased attendance.
Edgewood ISD	Major initiatives and partnerships will be maintained despite grant funding. Local and state funding will be used to sustain program. The evaluation data will inform scope changes and design of the program.
Brownsville ISD	Have a dropout committee comprised of community organizations.

Source: Collaborative Cycle 1 grant applications

As with the six Cycle 1 grantees, each Cycle 2 grantee indicated their plan to sustain their programs after the grant period. The proposed strategies are presented in Table 7.6. Most of the grantees plan to examine the effectiveness of their program by collecting and analyzing various data. The results, in many cases, would be reviewed by some form of governing body to monitor progress and make improvements. Other Cycle 2 grantees also will focus on establishing strong relationships with the community and their partners to ensure sustainability.

Table 7.6: Sustainability Planning Initiatives Undertaken by Collaborative Cycle 2 Grantees

Grantee Name	Planning Efforts
Austin ISD	Building of collaborative processes; building of relationships with local employers; identification of new funding sources.
Carrizo Springs CISD	Soliciting feedback, monitoring progress, identifying program deficiencies, and correcting the program deficiencies.
Corsicana ISD	Meeting quarterly with campus leadership team to discuss evaluation report; monitoring of five core questions.
Dallas ISD	Administering pre/post self assessments, monitoring attendance records, requiring online participant journals after each session, sharing of evaluation data with principals and stakeholders, reporting to Curriculum and Instruction.
Dallas Can! Charter Academy	Comparing participant data to non-participant data at other schools; baseline tools, attendance, and survey data will be reviewed monthly; info disseminated to superintendent and TEA.
Del Valle ISD	Meeting weekly between grant manager and key program participants; regular, informal email feedback.
Everman ISD	Submitting feedback and progress reports to planning team and monitoring outcomes. This will be done by the program manager, budget manager, campus administrators, and educators together.
George Gervin Charter Academy	Reviewing progress on reporting systems for e-learning modules; student participation logs; student-specific checklists; benchmark testing every six weeks; dissemination to administrators.
Harlandale ISD	Compiling data every three weeks, reporting every six weeks on student outcomes; leading education staff members and CTE coordinator meet with counselors, report on students each six weeks; meet with community representatives.
McAllen ISD	Ongoing monitoring; information collected by grant manager and reported monthly; campus leadership team meets quarterly; grant manager continues to assess data as evaluation progresses.
Palestine ISD	Using data on 14 target outcomes and number of students promoted to grades 10 and 11 on time; school metrics to measure effectiveness of implementation; sharing data with collaborative partners.
Pasadena ISD	Soliciting information regularly for the quantitative, qualitative, and formative evaluations; addressing identified program deficiencies at least monthly.
Plainview ISD	Overseeing analyses and major events by grant committee; communicating outside of school by project manager.

Grantee Name	Planning Efforts
San Antonio ISD	Recording attendance and services after each contact with a student; providing sign-in sheets for all people involved; providing ongoing feedback from project manager to staff; disseminating findings to TEA and community quarterly.
Snyder ISD	Evaluation committee will meet each six weeks to discuss effectiveness and improvement; staff will receive a benchmark graph; the team will decide on suitable indicators at every level; staff will receive ongoing TA and training.
Spring Branch ISD	Interventions will be evaluated on a student-level basis every nine weeks; the district research staff and instructional leadership team will evaluate data and survey teachers, parents, and students; crisis intervention teams for students with grades below 70%.

Source: Collaborative Cycle 2 grant applications

Summary

Findings from the analysis of data about cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the Collaborative program were presented in this chapter. This provides the first look at the allocation of funds to Collaborative Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees, as well as the expenditure of funds by Cycle 1 grantees during the first nine months (out of 22 months) of the grant project period. While a clearer picture of cost-effectiveness will be provided in the next evaluation report closer to the end of the grant project period for Cycle 1, the analysis of Cycle 1 grantee expenditure data shows that grantees have spent 38% of allocated funds and have served 67% of the students they had planned to serve. Thus far, spending per student is $468, which is well below the allocated $834 per student.

8. Discussion and Next Steps for the Collaborative Program

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Five of the six Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees implemented their programs with fidelity, and preliminary quantitative findings indicate that the grant program is having statistically significant, positive effects, such as on students' TAKS math and TAKS science achievement. Moreover, qualitative findings from Collaborative stakeholders support these positive effects. Improvements have been noticed in students' ethical workplace behaviors, technological knowledge, leadership skills, and to a lesser extent, oral and written communications skills. Table 8.1 summarizes qualitative findings from the five site visits. These results indicate consistent perceptions among stakeholders at all five grantee sites that the Collaborative program is improving behavior, college readiness, and effective leadership skills. Perceptions are generally mixed on whether the Collaborative program is influencing dropout rates, improved family support, and ethical workplace behaviors. Regardless, there is universal agreement among stakeholders that the Collaborative is making a difference for at risk students.

Table 8.1: Perceived Effectiveness of Collaborative Grantees on Selected Outcomes

Outcome	Houston	Los Fresnos	School of Excellence in Education	Edgewood	Brownsville
Academic Achievement	—	↑	↑	↑	↑
Attendance Improvement	—	—	↑↑	↑	↑
Improved Behavior	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Dropout Rates	—	—	—	—	↑
Course Completion Rates	—	↑	↑	↑	↑
College Readiness	↑	↑	↑↑	↑	↑
Improved Family Support	—	—	↑	—	—
Technological Knowledge	↑	↑↑	↑	—	↑
Ethical Workplace Behaviors	—	↑	—	—	—
Effective Leadership Skills	↑↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
Oral and Written Communication Skills	↑	↑↑	↑	—	↑

Source: Collaborative Site Visits, Spring 2009
↓ -- Perceived Negative Changes
— -- No Perceived Changes/Neutral
↑ -- Positive Changes Perceived
↑↑ -- Strong Positive Changes Perceived, with Evidence of Impact

Perhaps the best early evidence of the program's effects comes from students who are served by the program. At the end of the Collaborative Student Survey, students were asked to describe whether the Collaborative program made a difference, and if so, how. A sample of responses appears below:

Overall, would you say the program helped you in school? If so, what are some of the ways it helped you?

- *I am 21, have 2 kids, divorced, and pregnant with my third child. No traditional school would allow me to attend and I am adamant about finishing high school and not getting a GED. [The Collaborative program] has given me that chance.*
- *I have been able to finish my high school and to start on planning my career.*
- *It prepared me for all of the job opportunities for the future and taught me that everything learned in school can somehow help me in the future.*
- *The CCTA program has helped me in school by giving me a second chance for a high school diploma, instead of being pointed out as a dropout.*
- *This program has helped me by opening my eyes and showing me that without school there is no future.*
- *[It helped] me to finish my credits, and also allowed me to be home with my son. Thank you.*
- *It made me realize that I have to graduate and start a career, to have a better life.*
- *I'd say it helped me a lot. It has helped me grow as a person and most importantly, they helped me finish school.*
- *[It] made me more determined to graduate and go to college.*
- *It helped me to become a better writer and a more efficient speaker in front of a group of people.*
- *They took me to the University of Texas at Brownsville and I saw that it wasn't that bad of a place and now I feel like going to college.*
- *CCTA helped me to believe in myself, get my diploma, and never give up.*

Overall, would you say the program helped you in your career? If so, what are some of the ways it helped you?

- *CCTA provided me with opportunities to go and see real life people working in their everyday jobs, so yes, I would say they helped me in my career.*
- *I do not have a career yet, but CCTA has helped me with job skills which will help me when I pursue a career.*
- *[It helped me] with job skills and learning how to be productive in life.*
- *It gave me people skills.*
- *It has helped me a lot - just the fact that I am going to finish high school is the first step to developing my career.*
- *It motivated me to continue school and that in itself is a building step for my career.*
- *Hearing some of the presentations from my class made me realize how I want to change how people see people from poor and broken sides of town, and help that [part of the] community to do better.*

Are there things about the program that you think did not work or could be improved? If so, what?

- *Be more creative with my work to make it more interesting.*
- *Everything is great, awesome environment, great teachers and staff, what else could we want.*
- *I think that there could be less students per session so as to have 1 teacher for [a smaller number of] students.*
- *I think [the Collaborative program] is difficult to finish a little. I think they should have teachers teaching one on one so we could learn better. If we had work on paper I think it would be better…looking at the computer puts me to sleep because of the bright light.*
- *I think they should do rewards, field trips, tutoring help, and try to be more [accessible to] the students.*
- *More group discussions and hands on learning.*
- *There could be more job shadowing and helping students to find the right college or school.*
- *I think we should meet more times a month, like once every two weeks.*

Is there anything else about the program that you wanted to mention?

- *I would like to give thanks to all the people that helped me and others to be successful.*
- *I am very thankful about having joined Collaborative. It has given me a lot of helpful information about what to do for myself to get ready for college.*
- *I believe this program is great for kids like myself who only need a little push to continue successfully in life.*
- *I greatly appreciate this chance to graduate. It means a lot to me. I was stuck in a losing situation and CCTA helped me rise above it.*
- *It's a good program and it has given me a lot of strength.*
- *It was an "eye opener" to what is coming up real soon in college.*
- *It was the greatest experience of my life so far.*
- *This is a very good program/school because it's a second opportunity for students.*

The consistency of praise for the Collaborative program from both students and staff was encouraging. Even though all five Collaborative programs that were the subject of this study had different service models, student populations, and areas of focus, they were consistent with regard to the positive feedback that was received.

Cycle 2 Grantees

This preliminary evaluation of the Cycle 2 Collaborative grantee applications suggests that many of these Collaborative programs are similar to the Cycle 1 Collaborative grantees in terms of the program objectives, the types of services offered, and the types of partnerships formed to support these programs. Key differences were found as well. For example, Cycle 1 grantee schools appear to have students with more prevalent risk factors for dropping out, including limited English proficiency, economic disadvantage, and enrollment in special education. However, other differences suggest that Cycle 2 schools are not at lower risk for dropout; namely, Cycle 2 schools have greater average mobility rates and very similar proficiency levels on TAKS math, reading, and science exams to Cycle 1 schools. Both cohorts of Collaborative grantees operate in high-risk, high-need areas, and both cohorts of grantees are expected to implement their programs with the same goals in mind.

Limitations

It is important to note that outcome data is just starting to come in on the Collaborative program. Because of lag times in the release of data, primary outcomes such as dropout rates, attendance rates, behavioral measures, and course completion rates are not available for the first year of program implementation. Qualitative evidence, however, is encouraging. One grantee (School of Excellence in Education) reported a 98% attendance rate in the first semester, and there is widespread agreement that behavior is improving. One grant coordinator, for example, noted that students have more pride and they are thriving as they are being held to higher standards.

Moreover, the results presented thus far do not have a comparison group, so statements cannot be made about what would have happened in the absence of the program. The best that can be said at the moment is that initial indications support the evaluation team's hypothesis that the Collaborative program appears to be making a positive difference for at risk students.

Next Steps for the Collaborative Program

As additional TAKS data, cost data, and PEIMS data become available from both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees, these findings will continue to be expanded and refined. The availability of school-level TAKS results in the fall of 2009 will allow us to complete the quasi-experimental study to determine whether the Collaborative program had stronger outcomes over schools within the same district that did not implement the Collaborative. This study will constitute the first rigorous assessment of the program's effects. In Year 2 of the evaluation, the evaluation team will also aim to capture data that will allow us to assess the quality of collaboration between grantees and their community partners. By delving deeper into this concept, the evaluation team can provide TEA and its grantees with a stronger framework by which quality collaboration can be understood.

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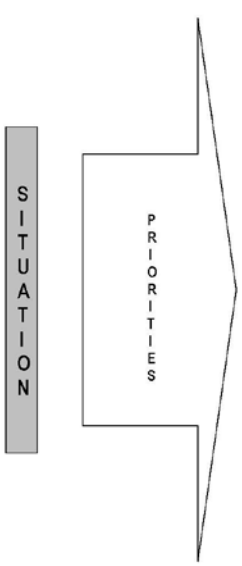
Appendix A: Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program Logic Model

Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program
Statewide Logic Model

Mission: The goal of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program is to coordinate services among community-based, school-based, and other government entities (local businesses, other local governments or law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education) to deliver proven, research-based intervention services to: (1) comprehensively reduce the number of students who drop out of school in that community; and (2) increase the "college and workforce readiness" (i.e., job skills, employment opportunities, and continuing education opportunities) of students who might otherwise have dropped out of school. (H.B. No. 2237, Sec. 29.096).



Inputs

The resources and contributions allocated for this effort:

- Eligible school districts or open enrollment charter schools that have exhibited characteristics that strongly correlate with high dropout rates during each of the three preceding school years
- State discretionary grants ($4M) + matching funds from district and/or partners
- State program staff
- District/school administrators
- District/school lead educational staff member (coord.)
- Employee volunteer mentors
- Local collaborative agreements with local businesses, other local governments or law enforcement agencies, nonprofit orgs, faith-based orgs, and institutions of higher education (IHEs)
- Research base on effective dropout reduction strategies/practices/intervention services

Outputs

Activities

Outreach

- Identifying and involving eligible students and collaborative partners to participate in the program

Workforce Skill Development

- Paid employment or internship opportunities
- Advanced career and vocational training
- Mentoring students
- School-related volunteer activities
- Workforce training

Academic Support

- Innovative instructional techniques (including electronic course delivery) for courses in the enrichment curriculum
- College-readiness training
- Academic remediation
- Acceleration opportunities
- Continuing education opportunities

Attendance Improvement

- Attendance interventions

Student and Family Support Initiatives

- Encouraging school involvement of parents of students enrolled in program

Participants

People who participate or are targeted:

- Students in grades 9-12 authorized to participate by a parent/guardian who are from a population where at least 50% are at-risk of dropping out of school in districts and/or 75% or more of students enrolled in the district are identified as being economically disadvantaged during the preceding three school years.

(*See list of grantees and estimated numbers of students participating in each grantee program)

Outcomes – Impact

Implementation

- Describe the characteristics of districts/campuses served
- Describe the demographic characteristics of students served
- Describe the ways in which districts/campuses implement the program
  - Partners
  - Responsibilities and roles of those involved
  - Types of activities
- Assess the degree of student participation at each grade level
- Describe the barriers/facilitators to implementation
- Describe practices/ models that are successful at grantee campuses

Cost

- Describe how grant funds were used
- Describe the factors contributing to and prohibiting the ongoing sustainability of the program
- Measure the implementation cost per student
- Assess how cost savings differ from alternative programs

Impact

Student Outcomes

- Increase number of students graduating from high school
- Decrease dropout rates
- Improve student achievement
- Improve promotion rates
- Raise course completion rates
- Raise SAT/ACT scores

Students' Career Readiness Skills

- Improve students' job skills, including:
  - technological knowledge
  - ethical workplace conduct behaviors
  - effective leadership skills
  - oral and written communication skills
- Increase students' employment opportunities

Assumptions

- Effective solutions to the dropout crisis should be multi-faceted.
- Effective solutions to the dropout crisis should involve cooperation among schools and individuals and organizations from outside of the traditional school community to provide effective interventions and services to students at risk of dropping out of school.
- Pilot projects initiated by each grantee will naturally vary in how they are designed and implemented.
- Interventions and activities such as workforce and college-readiness training, internship and employment opportunities, academic remediation and acceleration opportunities, attendance interventions, student and family support initiatives, and other strategies have been found to be effective in assisting at-risk students to be better prepared to succeed both in and out of school.
- The pilot program will foster collaborations with local businesses, other local governments or law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education.

External Factors

- The decision to drop out of school is influenced by multiple and interrelated personal, demographic, social, and school-based factors.

Appendix B: Case Study Reports

Evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program Case Study – Houston Independent School District (Urban)

Six of the eligible Texas school districts and open enrollment charter schools were awarded grants by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in amounts ranging from $130,000 to $250,000 for two years (2008–2010) to design and implement a Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) Pilot Program. The overall purpose of the grant is to provide strategies for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

As part of the evaluation of the Collaborative pilot program, case studies of five grantees representing school districts and charter schools were included to provide valuable, in-depth information about the:

- Program structure of the various Collaborative pilot programs
- Barriers and facilitators of the program implementation process
- Perceived effects of the program on students (e.g., attendance improvement, ethical workplace behavior)
- Participants' thoughts about the future of the project (e.g., changes, sustainability).

To develop a comprehensive profile of these five grantees and their implementation of the Collaborative pilot program, data were drawn from multiple sources:

- The grantee application
- Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) (TEA, 2007-08)
- Summary notes from phone interviews about the implementation of the Collaborative pilot program with Collaborative grant coordinators and collaborative partner representatives that took place between December 2008 and February 2009
- Individual interviews conducted during a site visit with key project personnel and participants in each of the five Collaborative pilot programs at their school district/charter school.

To ensure confidentiality, the case studies do not identify individual school districts/charter schools.

Case Study: Houston Independent School District

In March 2009, a three-day site visit took place at Houston Independent School District (ISD), an urban school district in eastern Texas. Three public high schools and one charter high school participated in the Collaborative program. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the district grant coordinator, three of the four principals, and three teachers who were the campus coordinators for this project. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about Collaborative program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from a telephone interview conducted in December 2008 and Houston ISD's grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Houston ISD Characteristics

Table 1 provides a summary of Houston ISD's Collaborative pilot program including schools, grades, and students served, as well as details of the award.

Table 1: Summary of Houston ISD's Collaborative Pilot Program

Community Type	Urban
Grades Served	9–12
Number of Schools Served	4
Type of Schools Served	3 public high schools; 1 charter high school
Number of Students Served	Up to 200
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	8/1/2008
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

Schools

The high schools selected by Houston ISD to participate in the Collaborative program have a significantly higher at risk student population than the district as a whole. They also have larger concentrations of minority students (African-American and Hispanic). However, with the exception of one school, the participating schools have a lower percentage of limited English proficient students. Additionally, the participating high schools have a higher mobility rate than the state as a whole. Table 2 presents demographic information and risk factors for the targeted schools.

Table 2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2007-08)

School Name	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At risk	Mobility (2006-07)
Public HS 1	13.3%	77.0%	3.5%	88.8%	38.0%	85.2%	38.3%
Public HS 2	69.4%	30.0%	0.2%	75.2%	8.0%	80.2%	27.6%
Public HS 3	61.4%	37.9%	0.2%	74.3%	9.2%	77.2%	30.6%
Charter HS	23.4%	74.1%	2.5%	79.1%	14.6%	86.1%	73.8%
Houston ISD	28.5%	60.3%	8.0%	79.5%	29.7%	65.0%	--
Texas	14.3%	47.2%	34.8%	55.3%	16.7%	48.4%	20.9%

Source: AEIS

Overview of Houston ISD Collaborative Pilot Program

According to the grant coordinator and collaborative partner representative, the overall purpose of the Houston ISD Collaborative pilot program is to increase student engagement and decrease dropout. The program should engage students in the educational process so they feel more connected to school.

Program Structure[30]

Houston ISD was identified as a district with a high dropout rate and was required to submit a dropout prevention plan to the state. The school analyzed data and looked at new funding opportunities that were available, and when this grant opportunity was announced, the district grant coordinator felt it was a good fit. Houston ISD partnered with the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), an internationally recognized nonprofit organization which oversees and implements Coca Cola Valued Youth, a cross-age tutoring program. The goal was to enroll 200 students from these four campuses into the tutoring program as part of this grant, and at the time of the site visit, there were 65 students participating. Some of the students graduated mid-year and there are some returning dropouts.

The participating students serve as tutors to students at elementary schools and receive a financial incentive for program participation and completion. The tutors keep a monthly journal to record reflections on their performance and on the tutoring experience. Tutors also evaluate their field trips and guest speakers. Formal classroom observations of the tutors are conducted at least twice during the school year, once by the teacher coordinators and once by the partnering organization. At the end of the school year, the partnering organization interviews two tutors from each school to document the tutors' reflections on the tutoring experience.

The student tutors also are required to attend a weekly class period where the partnering organization's curriculum is taught. The teacher coordinator for each campus teaches this class. Because the students' task is to tutor younger students in academic subjects, the participating students study diverse learning methods and study skills, as well as the curricula of a variety of subject areas. Houston ISD contends that this exposure to new ways of understanding the learning process stimulates academic performance in the participating student through self-awareness, increased literacy skills, improved understanding of the educational process, comprehension of obstacles to learning, and strategies to overcoming those obstacles such as low motivation and anxiety. In addition, the teacher coordinator makes referrals to existing district resources and agencies regarding the social service needs of the participating students.

Collaborative Partners

Houston ISD partnered with a nonprofit organization which oversees and implements the cross-age tutoring program. Because three high schools have already implemented the tutoring program prior to receiving the grant, Houston ISD and the organization already had a good relationship and partnership. The partnering organization provides training and technical assistance to program sites, on-site support to teachers, ongoing program monitoring, evaluation and monitoring that supports formative program improvement, as well as the collection of evaluation data for a summative annual written evaluation. Other activities include tutor video conferencing, district and

[30] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

regional leadership days, and a national conference. They also supply materials needed for the implementation team and workbooks for the tutors.

Collaborative Pilot Program Implementation

Implementation of the Collaborative pilot program is primarily the responsibility of Houston ISD with guidance from the partnering organization. The partnering organization created an implementation plan and staff traveled to Houston ISD (the organization is based in another region in Texas) and helped guide the teachers, business office, and principals upon program implementation. There is one campus teacher coordinator at each participating high school campus. Their primary responsibilities are:

- Teaching the partnering organization's curriculum. Each teacher coordinator teaches one class period of the partnering organization's curriculum with no added stipend provided by the grant.
- Coordinating with the receiving elementary teachers.
- Monitoring, tutoring, and supervising participating students.
- Evaluating and grading students.
- Coordinating required field trips and family meetings, communications, and guest speakers.

The high school students are expected to tutor once a week at the elementary school (totaling about 100 hours per school year). Additionally, the high school students must attend one class per week using the partner organization's curriculum, for which they get credit. The elementary school also builds tutoring time into their schedule.

The secondary school principal initiates decisions about the tutor selection process in collaboration with the teacher coordinator, school counselor(s), and others as appropriate. These decisions are based on guidelines for determining which students are at risk of dropping out, the group's development of selection criteria, and prudent use of information about students. After tutors (i.e., high school students) are selected, parent consent is obtained.

Barriers to Program Implementation

One of the biggest challenges identified by the grant coordinator, principals, and teachers is processing students' human resources paperwork. Because the students are paid employees, they must go through the district hiring process. Some of the participating high school students are undocumented immigrants; therefore, paying these students was identified as a challenge that the teachers, principals, and grant coordinator were attempting to resolve.

An additional barrier was having a partner who is not local. Although the partner is quick to respond to questions and comes to the schools frequently, being in two different cities limits accessibility. Another barrier related to location was identified by the grant coordinator. Currently, the program is configured to implement at multiple campuses across the city. In hindsight, the grant coordinator would have liked to focus on only two campuses.

Budget monitoring is also more challenging than expected. Monies have to be approved by the district's school board and then pushed out through the schools. The grant coordinator dealt with four business managers (one from each participating campus) and their systems to make sure the monies were spent correctly. The grant coordinator felt that only having this program at two campuses would have helped to reduce this barrier.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

While distance from the partner organization was noted as a challenge, good communication between Houston ISD and the partner organization was noted as a facilitator to implementation. The district and the partner see themselves as one team. The grant coordinator stated that working with the organization on prior projects helped build the relationship of trust between them. They have become a tightly knit group.

Relationship between Collaborative Staff and Students

The principals saw the relationship between Collaborative staff and students as positive and good. They noted that there is an opportunity for the average student to be successful. It gives them course credits, a small salary, and a sense of ownership and pride for their school. The teachers' perspective is that the students are learning what it is like to have a job and a boss, as well as appropriate work behavior. The teachers reported interest in watching the behavior between the high school student and the elementary student. They indicated that a positive relationship was developing between the two students.

> *"There is a student who had poor attendance, poor attitude, and poor grades. We just looked at his TAKS scores and, wow, he blew them away. Now we need to figure out how to keep him going – how to keep him focused."*
>
> -Principal

Perceived Effects of Collaborative Pilot Program Activities

During the site visit interviews, the grant coordinator and teachers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that the Collaborative program affected:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills.

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Academic Achievement

Interviewed teachers indicated that some of their students' grades were improving. However, there was some uncertainty, as the interview took place in March and end-of-semester grades were not yet tallied.

Attendance Improvement

> *"One student did not want to come to school, but now you can't keep him away from school."*
> -Teacher

The perceptions of improved student attendance were mixed from interviewed participants. Teachers reported that some participating students were not coming to school, but other students in the tutoring program appeared eager to attend and work. However, the grant coordinator noted that student attendance records were hard to track longitudinally, especially for the freshmen from different campuses. One teacher reported, "The students they tutor at the elementary school want the high school students to be there." Teachers indicated that the tutors want their elementary students to do well, which in turn positively affects the high school students' attitude.

Improved Behavior

The behavior of high school students seemed to improve while participating in the Collaborative pilot program. The grant coordinator reported having fewer suspensions from student participants. A teacher observed one student who had a positive change in attitude when the student spoke about the tutored elementary students. Teachers believed that the students participating in the program now want to come to school because they do not want to disappoint their elementary students.

Dropout Rates

The data on dropout rates was not available at the time of the site visit; however, the teachers anticipated that all the students in the program would graduate. To encourage students to apply and attend college, speakers from local colleges came to the high school campuses to talk with the students about college and the admissions process.

Course Completion Rates

The teacher coordinators from each high school campus collected the baseline data on course completion rates as requested by the partnering organization; however, at the time of the interviews, the reports were not complete, and therefore, not collected.

Improved family support/relationships with family

The interviewed participants did not have any information regarding this outcome.

College Readiness

The teachers talk to their students about attending college and invite speakers from different college campuses. They do not limit their discussions to four-year colleges; they also include community colleges and technical schools. The teachers hope that speakers' success stories will "plant a seed" in their students. Additionally, there is a college center available to student participants to help with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), provide scholarship information, and remind them of college admission deadlines.

Technological Knowledge

As a result of participating in the Collaborative pilot program, students are increasing their technological knowledge. For example, the participating students are required to do their monthly journals online. At first, the students experienced some difficulty learning the online system, but as time went on it became a smoother process. One teacher reported that a student who had worked at a hotel front desk used a computer, and now the student is leaving that job and working as a receptionist that requires the student to use a computer and a phone system.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

According to the grant coordinator, workforce readiness is the weakest part of the program. To remedy this, the district is looking to partner with an organization that provides comprehensive human resource services for businesses and residents to supplement the existing Collaborative program. However, one teacher pointed out that participating students learned how to dress appropriately. One high school student has a tattoo that is visible on her arm. On the high school student's second day of tutoring, the elementary student put a fake tattoo on his own arm. The high school student realized what an influence she had on the student and covered her tattoo going forward. In addition, the teachers perceived that the students gained an understanding of how to appropriately interact with peers.

Effective Leadership Skills

The grant coordinator believes that leadership skills have increased "without a doubt." The experience provided by participation in the Collaborative pilot program allows the participating students to build their leadership skills. For one, being in charge of an elementary student, having to meet their expectations, and have responsibility for someone else's learning outcome is a new concept for the students. Secondly, the high school students are a role model for the elementary students. The elementary students "perk up" when the high school tutors walk in the room. The relationship between the elementary student and the tutor was described as an amazing dynamic by the teachers. The grant coordinator believes that the high school students learn more about leadership in tutoring than they would in any other course.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

According to the teachers' perception, oral communication has improved. At first, some of the students were not confident in their use of the English language. The teachers indicated that the communication skills of the high school students are not where they should be for their age, but the teachers stated they noticed a definite improvement.

Perceived Impact of the Collaborative Pilot Program from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, principals, and teachers were asked about the perceived impact of the Collaborative pilot program from their individual perspective. According to the grant coordinator, there is camaraderie among participating students because they are in the program together. The grant coordinator listens to them talk about what their "little ones" are learning. Some of the high school students have even spent their tutoring earnings to buy gifts for their elementary students. Some high school students are also paying bills or buying medicine for their families. Most of the high school students are from needy families and some of them work other jobs in addition to tutoring. A large percentage of the students' paychecks go to helping their family. The ability to help the students' family is an unanticipated outcome that has resulted from participating in the program. In addition, the teacher coordinators believe that: a) the students are more outgoing, b) they are more willing to take a chance, and c) they believe in themselves more. One teacher stated she did not think some of the high school students would have gone to college if it had not been for the program.

Students. According to the teachers, the high school students love the program. The students are excited and come to class ready to learn. The students are receptive and understand that the program is designed to help them. The principals believe that the program is building the students' self-esteem. The principals even reported that some students now want to be teachers and want to open a daycare center. These students are starting to see a career path. Additionally, the grant coordinator stated that it has made the participating students more cognizant of their own younger brothers and sisters in monitoring and helping them with their learning.

Parents. The principals have not received feedback from the parents, but the students are telling them that their parents like the program. The teachers at the charter school noted that most of the students are 18-21 years old and sign their own forms so the parents are not a big part of the program.

Teachers. The principals stated that the high school teachers appreciate that the students receive credit for this program through the mandatory class. The elementary school teachers have stated that they value the extra help they get from the high school students.

Principals. One principal noted that non-participating elementary school principals in the district are asking for the high school principal's students to tutor their elementary students. It is clear that attention and interest in the Collaborative pilot program has increased within the district.

Sustainability and Enhancement

The grant coordinator is working to sustain the Collaborative pilot program after grant funding ends. The grant coordinator started a dialogue with the partnering organization to continue the program in at least two of the schools. There are no leads for the additional funding that is needed to ensure the sustainability of the program due to the poor state of the economy. There are fewer potential partners now than ever before because of the weak economy. Wachovia Bank and Exxon are a couple of the biggest supporters; however, because of their financial situations they are not able to help with any funding. The principals noted that it would be difficult to sustain the program activities without the grant, but they would look for other grants to help. One non-participating elementary school campus has contacted one of the participating high school principals to have the high school students tutor their elementary students. The receiving elementary school campus indicated that they could use money from their own budget to pay the salaries of the high school students. However, the high school would still need to provide the teacher coordinator and the course curriculum from the partnering organization.

Conclusion

Houston ISD is an urban school district in eastern Texas that is implementing the Collaborative pilot program in three public high schools and one charter high school. The primary barrier to implementing the Collaborative pilot program is paying the high school students. Some of the students are undocumented immigrants so they cannot be hired by the district in order to receive their paycheck for tutoring. The grant coordinator and principals are still in the process of resolving this issue. Additionally, the distance between participating schools is a challenge for the grant coordinator. Budget monitoring has also been difficult because the grant coordinator has to deal with each school's business manager to ensure the grant funding is being allocated correctly because it is not managed at the district level. While these factors have hindered implementation, good communication with the partnering organization was noted as a facilitator to implementation. Even though the partner is not geographically close to Houston ISD, they quickly respond to questions and visit the participating schools frequently.

Houston ISD's Collaborative pilot program appears to have some positive results on key evaluation indicators for participating students based on comments from the grant coordinator and teachers. As a result of their participation, students grades have been improving, their attendance rate has slowly gotten better, and there have been fewer suspensions. These outcomes are a good indication that the students will stay in school. In addition, the students have greater access to information related to college, they have improved their technological knowledge, and they have gained valuable leadership and communication skills. These skills will be valuable to the students as they enter the workforce or begin their college careers. The high school students have become role models for their tutees and are building their self-esteem in the process.

While this program is seemingly beneficial to the participating students (both high school and elementary) it is not clear whether the district can maintain the program once grant funding is over.

During the national recession, businesses cannot afford to donate their money or time as they did in the past; Houston ISD will need to look for other grants that can replace the Collaborative grant funding. Overall, the grantee is happy with their Collaborative pilot program and would like to continue it in the future.

Evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program Case Study – Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District (Rural)

Six of the eligible Texas school districts and open enrollment charter schools were awarded grants by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in amounts ranging from $130,000 to $250,000 for two years (2008–2010) to design and implement a Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) Pilot Program. The overall purpose of the grant is to provide strategies for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

As part of the evaluation of the Collaborative pilot program, case studies of five grantees representing school districts and charter schools were included to provide valuable, in-depth information about the:

- Program structure of the various Collaborative pilot programs
- Barriers and facilitators of the program implementation process
- Perceived effects of the program on students (e.g., attendance improvement, ethical workplace behavior)
- Participants' thoughts about the future of the project (e.g., changes, sustainability).

To develop a comprehensive profile of these five grantees and their implementation of the Collaborative pilot program, data were drawn from multiple sources:

- The grant application
- Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) (TEA, 2007-08)
- Summary notes from phone interviews about the implementation of the Collaborative pilot program with Collaborative grant coordinators and collaborative partner representatives that took place between December 2008 and February 2009
- Individual interviews conducted during a site visit with key project personnel and participants in each of the five Collaborative pilot programs at their school district/charter school.

To ensure confidentiality, the case studies do not identify individual school districts/charter schools.

Case Study: Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District

In April 2009, a one-day site visit took place at Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District (CISD), a rural district in southern Texas. The district's only high school participated in the Collaborative program. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the district grant coordinator, the high school principal, two counselors at the College, Career, & Technology Academy (CCTA), one teacher at CCTA, and three partners. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about Collaborative program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from a telephone interview conducted in January 2009 and Los Fresnos CISD's grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Los Fresnos CISD Characteristics

A summary of Los Fresnos CISD's Collaborative pilot program including schools, student ages, and students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Los Fresnos CISD's Collaborative Pilot Program

Community Type	Rural
Age of Students Served	16-25
Number of Schools Served	1
Type of Schools Served	High School
Number of Students Served	Up to 200
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	8/1/2008
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

Schools

Los Fresnos CISD's high school is predominantly Hispanic with a large proportion of economically disadvantaged students. While the high school has significantly more Hispanic students than the state average, they have a lower percentage of limited English proficient students. The high school also has a larger percentage of at risk students than the district and the state.

Table 2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2007-08)

School Name	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At risk	Mobility (2005-06)
High School 1	0.3%	94.6%	5.0%	85.9%	11.6%	59.3%	19.3%
Los Fresnos CISD	0.5%	94.8%	4.4%	82.4%	27.0%	48.4%	17.2%
Texas	14.3%	47.2%	34.8%	55.3%	16.7%	48.4%	20.9%

Source: AEIS

Overview of Los Fresnos CISD Collaborative Pilot Program

According to the grant coordinator and principal, the overall purpose of the Los Fresnos CISD Collaborative pilot program is to meet the needs of the students by providing career and technical activities. The program should help potential dropouts through an intervention that brings in community businesses and local colleges to help the students graduate and gain valuable skills. The skills the students acquire at Los Fresnos CISD's College, Career, & Technology Academy (CCTA) will be useful as they enter workforce or attend college.

Program Structure[31]

Los Fresnos CISD is implementing the CCTA for their Collaborative pilot program. The CCTA program addresses academic support, family outreach, employment skills, and college readiness standards. CCTA provides programs of study for broad career concentrations in the areas of agriculture science and technology, arts and communication, business education, family and consumer science, health occupations technology, trade and industry, and technology education. The CCTA building is about one mile away from the high school and district offices and provides support to up to 200 students, ages 16-25, who currently attend or previously attended high school, but did not meet or are at high risk of not meeting graduation requirements. Participating students lack eight or fewer graduation credits and/or have not passed the Exit Level test (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills).

The admissions process for CCTA includes a formal interview and mandatory orientation where students are informed of the course requirements, attendance requirements, student responsibilities, postsecondary expectations, and career opportunities available. Students, as well as their parents or guardians, must sign a contract agreeing to the requirements of the program prior to their acceptance into the program. All participating students have personal graduation plans that they meet through CCTA's four academic support components: credit attainment, credit retrieval, tutoring and mentoring, and technology-assisted labs. Students take the coursework in Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) remediation and work towards credit retrieval. In addition to this coursework, all participants enroll in *College Success*, a three-credit college course that teaches the soft skills needed to succeed in postsecondary studies (e.g., time management, study habits, and financial decision-making).

Participating students also receive information on various career pathways and undergo orientation for dual enrollment at the partnering local university and technical school. These program elements allow students to immediately transfer to college upon completion of high school graduation requirements. To encourage and motivate students, CCTA hosts motivational speakers from similar backgrounds as targeted students who, despite adversity and challenges, are successful adults. Transportation and social service support are also available to students to support them as they proceed through the program.

Collaborative Partners

Los Fresnos CISD's initiative is supported through 14 collaborative partnerships. Partnering agencies include local universities, local technical colleges, a counseling center, a bank, and various local businesses. Collaborative partners support career skills and provide employment opportunities for participating students. One of the local colleges provides professional development

[31] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

workshops for instructors and dual enrollment college preparation courses for students. The local technical college also provides dual enrollment courses. In addition, they both offer academic support and continuing education opportunities to CCTA students. The counseling center offers student and family support services. Together, the collaborative partnerships align job skills, student support, continuing education, and dropout prevention in conjunction with recovery academics and research-based strategic curriculum and instruction. The grant coordinator stated that the relationship with the partners is very positive and understanding. All of the community partners interviewed during the site visit reported that their relationship with the district is good.

Collaborative Pilot Program Implementation

Los Fresnos CISD's Collaborative pilot program was described as more than just the CCTA. The high school staff, especially the counselors, are also involved in recommending students for the program by monitoring student progress and tracking their goals towards their graduation plan. The high school principal stated students are identified by reviewing progress of the student, years of attending school, ongoing academics, and the student's age. The students then apply to be in the CCTA program (with parent consent if under 17). They are required to complete an interview and then it is decided if the student qualifies.

> *"[The Collaborative pilot program] encompasses the entire efforts of the high school and CCTA. It includes tutoring, monitoring student progress, and checking their graduation plans. The counselors are the focus of attack because they work with students the most and can see if they are right for this program."*
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Additionally, the Collaborative pilot program supports tutoring for Grade 9 students (approximately 150 students) at the CCTA and at the high school. The district offers career fairs once or twice a month, but the grant coordinator indicated more is needed. The CCTA students also participate in a three-hour job shadowing class, *Marketing Yourself*, on Tuesdays and Thursdays at a local technical college. In addition, the county offers the students a computer mobile unit that shows how to create a resume and how to interview for a job.

Grant related activities are managed through the CCTA Team. The CCTA Team includes the Lead Educational Staff Member (LESM)/Coordinator for the grant, the High School Project Team, the Coordinator of Career and Technology, the Coordinator for Guidance and Counseling, and the Coordinator for Parental Involvement. CCTA Team members keep weekly activity logs of the program activities for which they are directly responsible. The LESM/Coordinator also submits a weekly progress report to the Superintendent of Schools, who spearheaded the CCTA Planning Team for this project. Business community members are provided updates on the project's progress through monthly newsletters and personal on-site visits. In an effort to ensure open communication and coordination, the LESM/Coordinator holds weekly meetings with team members and coordinates monthly by on-site meetings with all team members

Barriers to Program Implementation

One of the biggest barriers identified by the grant coordinator was getting students into the program. To address this issue, the district invited parents to a meeting about the Collaborative pilot program. In addition to getting students in the program, both counselors agreed that another challenge is gaining access to students earlier so they can address the needs of these at risk students. The counselors understand that early intervention is critical to the success of any dropout prevention program. The biggest challenge for one of the local colleges was enrolling the CCTA students. The local college indicated that the students did not understand why they should enroll.

As a result, the college implemented an individual service plan that underscored the benefit of enrolling while highlighting how the college could work around the students' schedule and interests.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

> *"Don't lose the personal touch."*
>
> -Counselor

The grant coordinator and principal both agreed that the Collaborative pilot program brings the students another opportunity for graduation. They believe that the program is a very good intervention model. A counselor and teacher agreed that the small class size at CCTA facilitates a close relationship between the Collaborative staff and students. This relationship is important because the students feel safe to share their opinions during class or confide in their counselors when something happens in the students' personal life. A partner interviewed felt that good communication and dedication from the CCTA and local college's staff facilitated the implementation of the program.

Relationship between Collaborative Staff and Students

The counselors and teacher agreed that there is a strong relationship between the students and Collaborative staff. The counselors often play a large role in the students' lives. One of the counselors stated, "Getting calls from students that have already graduated is not uncommon. I get calls from students all the time for help."

Perceived Effects of Collaborative Pilot Program Activities

The grant coordinator, counselors, and teacher discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that the Collaborative program affected:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills.

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Academic Achievement

All of the interviewed participants agreed that the personal attention received by the CCTA and participating high school students pushes the students to work harder. The grant coordinator also believes that the students are in a better position to obtain a job after graduation because many of the business partners have shown an interest in the students for future employment. One of the counselors stated that CCTA students' grades improved because CCTA brings in speakers that have similar backgrounds with the students and they are able to relate to them. These guest speakers provide evidence to the students that they can achieve success even with the challenges that may be present in their personal lives.

> *"The students have something to look forward to now [when guest speakers come to school]. Most of these students had extreme social situations which precluded them seeing the future as a success or even attainable. They were so busy just trying to get out."*
>
> -Counselor

Attendance Improvement

In general, the interviewed participants indicated that the school district has struggled with attendance. The two counselors reported that attendance of CCTA students depends on the individual student's situation; many are caretakers or a parent themself, making coming to school daily very difficult. The teacher indicated that CCTA's comfortable environment has promoted better attendance. The teacher added that students know that they are always welcome at the CCTA even if they have an issue that prevents them from attending. The grant coordinator explained, "Attendance can be divided into two groups: Group 1 is ready to meet goals and will be here every day and Group 2 needs additional help—not strong attendance. Once the Number 2 Group sees the first group graduate, hopefully they become the Number 1 Group." In other words, seeing other students graduate and succeed at the CCTA can be a motivating factor for other CCTA students.

Improved Behavior

The grant coordinator, counselors, and teacher agreed that there are no discipline problems at CCTA. The grant coordinator reported that there have not been any in-school suspensions or suspensions since the inception of CCTA. The CCTA faculty focus on positive moments and events and have not needed to punish the students.

> *"A positive change for them here is more respect, more consistency, and more plans for the future."*
>
> -Teacher

Dropout Rates

The counselors and teacher agreed that they expect the dropout rate to decrease because they can tell the students prefer classes more at CCTA. The teacher commented, "There is no reason not to come." The grant coordinator believes the dropout rate should be less, but did not have any official numbers at the time of the site visit; therefore the data were not collected.

Course Completion Rates

The grant coordinator reported that there has been a definite improvement in course completion as a result of receiving the grant. The teacher interviewed estimated that there is a 95% completion rate in his class. The teacher indicated that the students seem more eager to learn and have

started to voice their opinions more because they feel comfortable in the small class size setting. The counselors also agreed that more courses are being completed.

Improved family support/relationships with family

The interviewed participants had no information regarding this outcome.

College Readiness

The grant coordinator stated that she has seen a difference in the students' attitudes toward college, but they are still "hesitant and scared of the unknown." The staff at CCTA take the students on field trips to college campuses and help the students fill out applications and FAFSA (Federal Application for Federal Student Aid) forms. One counselor reported that students who attended the field trips return to CCTA and "will not let go" of the idea of going to college. The other counselor agreed that going to college is no longer an option for many students – it is a given.

Technological Knowledge

The grant coordinator and one counselor reported the participating students are learning valuable computer skills through using the A-Plus program (self-directed) and other computer programs available at the CCTA. Los Fresnos CISD used grant funds to purchase the A-Plus computer program for its students. There is also a Microsoft Office Programs class available to interested students. Once they complete the course they receive a certificate that can be attached to their resume. The local technical college partner stated that they offer approximately 33 technical programs that the students were not aware of before they enrolled in CCTA. The local technical college representative's perception was that CCTA has opened the students' eyes to new career opportunities.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Ethical workplace behaviors are modeled for the CCTA students by their many business partners. The students shadow various business professionals during a normal day at work and encounter the type of behavior that is appropriate in a workplace. Additionally, one of the counselors indicated CCTA's dress code is another way students learn what is appropriate, just as if they were at a workplace.

Effective Leadership Skills

Many of the students are developing leadership skills during their time at CCTA. The grant coordinator is confident that many students are becoming role models to other students in the program by modeling success. At weekly assemblies, students voice their opinions on how to improve the CCTA.

> *"The cream of the crop is rising to the surface."*
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Some students are becoming leaders by example. For instance, the teacher shared following story: "There is this one student that could be our campus poster child, if we had one. This student came in very behind in his credits. He was friendly to everyone here and is one of the students you will always remember – a very happy student. He wanted to graduate with his peers and showed up

every day for class. We found out that he rode a homemade bicycle to school every day. This bike was made with parts of all different type of cycles. The constable would stop him for driving this bike through town because of it being illegal to drive on the streets. He would hide his bike in the bushes at school so the constable wouldn't see it and so it wouldn't get stolen. He would drive through all types of weather just to get to school. Sometimes the tires were so full of mud I wondered how he could drive it. At school, he did everything we asked so he could complete the exit exam. Now he is on his way to graduate. I cry sometimes when I think about the lengths he went through just to get to school. I will always remember him."

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Each of the interviewed participants agreed that communication skills have definitely improved at CCTA. One counselor stated that some students came to CCTA completely shut down and did not talk, but now they come in and ask questions in a very professional manner. The other counselor shared that when the CCTA began he was the only person sharing during his group sessions, but now, "I can't get a word in." He perceives that the students are more confident and secure in their spoken English language skills.

Perceived Impact of the Collaborative Pilot Program from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, principal, collaborating partners, counselors, and teacher were asked about the perceived impact of the Collaborative pilot program from their individual perspective. According to the grant coordinator's perspective, there seems to be more communication between the students and staff because CCTA has helped students to make eye contact and speak up for themselves. The teacher and counselors agreed that even when the participating students have to retake the TAKS test numerous times, they do not quit. One counselor added that when some of the students return to their home campus, they seem more confident and they participate in school activities. CCTA students get to see that there is life beyond their town by going on field trips to college campuses. As one counselor stated, "Many of the students are Generation One and don't have parents that can share this experience with them."

Students. The teacher and counselors believe that the students are appreciative of the program. One of the counselors added that students she has spoken to say, "Without this (CCTA), they would not have made it."

Parents. Interviewed participants reported that parents are thankful for this program and they want to learn more about the Collaborative pilot program. One counselor said that a parent indicated that her child was ready to drop out of school, but now since being at CCTA, her child wants to stay in school. The grant coordinator also reported that families come in and thank the staff for helping their children and sparking their interest in new careers.

> *"Some parents have even stopped staff on the street to thank them for what they are doing with their children. It is great."*
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Teachers. The interviewed CCTA teacher stated that the feedback he has received from the high school teachers has been very positive and some of the teachers have expressed an interest in working at CCTA. The CCTA teacher added, "The other teachers want to know what we are doing so they can incorporate the same strategies in their classrooms." One counselor stated that the high school teachers know they have another avenue for their students that are at risk of dropping out.

Principal. The principal of the high school is a member of the student interview committee allowing her to work with the program in its initial steps. The principal clearly understands the benefits of this program and values its presence in the district. The counselors agreed that the principal works very closely with the program and is committed to continuing its success.

Sustainability and Enhancement

> *"If the grant ended, the program would continue because it's a need for our community."*
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Sustainability of the Collaborative pilot program is a priority for Los Fresnos CISD. The grant coordinator said that the majority of the grant money at this point is used toward teacher salaries, although next year the district can pay this portion. Additionally, the district will not have the expense of the A-Plus computer system because it has been purchased already. Other expenses can be allocated from the district's budget in the future.

The principal emphasized the importance of the district paying for teacher salaries to sustain the Collaborative pilot program. In addition to staffing, the district will need to purchase supplemental materials, modules, and technology to support the program. One partner praised the program and the district staff. The partner believes the program will continue because it is run well and the district has been effective and professional in their communication. Another partner added that, "We would definitely continue the program in the future and would find other funds." This commitment from the district and collaborating partners is a good indication that this program will be sustained after the end of the grant period.

Conclusion

Overall, the interviewed participants believe that the Collaborative pilot program is successfully helping students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Students that attend the CCTA are placed in small classes that engage them in learning and provide them the opportunity to actively participate in every lesson. CCTA students are also dually enrolled at a local college and have the advantage of going to the college campus to get a feel for the college experience. The students are being exposed to new career opportunities by being on campus and learning from guest speakers. The CCTA students are also exposed to new computer software that allows them to increase their technical knowledge and prepare them for college or the workforce.

Interviewed participants reported that the CCTA students are increasing their academic achievement while also decreasing the amount of inappropriate behavior that would lead to suspension. At the time of the site visit, there had been no serious behavioral violations. Additionally, it was reported that students are gaining valuable skills in areas such as leadership, communication, and ethical workplace behavior. The parents of these students seem very thankful that their child had the opportunity to participate in this program and are encouraged by what their child is learning at CCTA. The high school staff are also pleased with having the Collaborative pilot program as it is another tool they can utilize to help struggling students. Sustaining the Collaborative pilot program after the grant period is very important to the district and the interviewed participants. Funding for the CCTA can be provided by the district and through other available funding sources. This program is highly valued by the participants.

Evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program Case Study – School of Excellence in Education (Suburban)

Six of the eligible Texas school districts and open enrollment charter schools were awarded grants by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in amounts ranging from $130,000 to $250,000 for two years (2008–2010) to design and implement a Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) Pilot Program. The overall purpose of the grant is to provide strategies for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

As part of the evaluation of the Collaborative pilot program, case studies of five grantees representing school districts and charter schools were included to provide valuable, in-depth information about the:

- Program structure of the various Collaborative pilot programs
- Barriers and facilitators of the program implementation process
- Perceived effects of the program on students (e.g., attendance improvement, ethical workplace behavior)
- Participants' thoughts about the future of the project (e.g., changes, sustainability).

To develop a comprehensive profile of these five grantees and their implementation of the Collaborative pilot program, data were drawn from multiple sources:

- The grantee application
- Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) (TEA, 2007-08)
- Summary notes from phone interviews about the implementation of the Collaborative pilot program with Collaborative grant coordinators and collaborative partner representatives that took place between December 2008 and February 2009
- Individual interviews conducted during a site visit with key project personnel and participants in each of the five Collaborative pilot programs at their school district/charter school.

To ensure confidentiality, the case studies do not identify individual school districts/charter schools.

Case Study: School of Excellence in Education

The two-day site visit for School of Excellence in Education was completed in April 2009. The School of Excellence in Education is a suburban charter school district in western Texas. The district's only high school participated in the Collaborative program. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the district grant coordinator, a district administrator, the project director, the high school STEM Academy principal, three teachers, and two collaborative partners. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about Collaborative program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from a telephone interview conducted in February 2009 and School of Excellence in Education's grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

School of Excellence in Education Characteristics

A summary of School of Excellence in Education's Collaborative pilot program including schools, grades served, and students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of School of Excellence in Education's Collaborative Pilot Program

Community Type	Suburban
Grades Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	1
Type of Schools Served	High School
Number of Students Served	Up to 375
Grant Amount	$249,975
Start Date	8/1/2008
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

Schools

High School 1 is the only high school in the School of Excellence in Education district and, therefore, the only school to participate in the Collaborative pilot program. The high school has a significantly higher at risk and economically disadvantaged student population than the state average. It also has larger concentrations of minority students (African-American and Hispanic), but a lower percentage of limited English proficient students. Table 2 presents demographic information and risk factors for the high school.

Table 2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2007-08)

School Name	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At risk	Mobility (2005-06)
High School 1	39.2%	53.0%	7.1%	73.2%	1.7%	63.1%	50.4%
School of Excellence in Education	42.7%	49.1%	7.5%	78.7%	4.1%	56.8%	35.4%
Texas	14.3%	47.2%	34.8%	55.3%	16.7%	48.4%	20.9%

Source: AEIS

Overview of School of Excellence in Education Collaborative Pilot Program

The goal of School of Excellence in Education's Collaborative pilot program is to provide incentives for students to stay in school by offering programs and services that differ from the typical academic school day. For example, the School of Excellence in Education partnered with a local college to offer students dual credit courses where students attend class at the college and earn credits for high school and their future college career simultaneously. The students are exposed to the college setting and learn about their options after graduation.

Program Structure[32]

School of Excellence in Education is implementing a branded dropout reduction program that focuses on tutoring and graduation plans, as well as support of the students' parents for their Collaborative pilot program. This program aims to reduce dropout and enhance graduation among high school students. The program established the following goals:

- Increasing the number of students graduating from high school under at least the recommended high school program
- Reducing the number of students who drop out of school
- Increasing students' job skills
- Increasing students' employment opportunities
- Providing continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school including dropout recovery and re-entry.

The program works by identifying students in Grades 9-12 who are designated as at risk for dropout by their academic advisors. Parents of these students are invited to informational meetings where they can learn about the Collaborative pilot program and provide consent for their children's participation. Parents can select to enroll their children anytime after their child has been designated as at risk. Upon enrollment, teachers and academic advisors ensure that all participants have Personal Graduation Plans (PGPs). PGPs, created in collaboration with parents and students, create road maps for students to facilitate their graduation. They are a state requirement for all students. Additional resources such as the A+ computer program for credit recovery, accrual, and advancement are made available for students who are not on target to graduate within four years of entering high school.

Additionally, the Collaborative pilot program includes a reading component that provides one-on-one training to students needing support with their reading skills. Reading teachers work with students until they are reading proficiently, at grade-level. Tutoring and enrichment classes are also made available to students having difficulty with math. As part of their course load, students are encouraged to take pre-advanced placement and advanced placement courses. They are also able to take dual credit courses as juniors and seniors. Parental involvement is also encouraged as part of the Collaborative pilot program. Parents are invited to attend college campus visits, college fair days, college fair nights, financial literacy trainings, and parent education meetings. They are also provided with information on social service programs as well as volunteer opportunities within the Collaborative pilot program. Finally, the Collaborative pilot program facilitates paid employment placements, internship opportunities, and advances career and vocational training for participating students through its partner organizations.

[32] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

Collaborative Partners

School of Excellence in Education partners with several community organizations and institutions of higher education in order to implement the Collaborative pilot program. A local college offers an in-house academic advisor as well as dual credit courses in fields such as Internet training for safety awareness, manufacturing, aeronautics, science, math, and engineering. The college also has a job placement department that assists students who earn certification in one of the fields of study in obtaining employment. A local community networking organization provides job-shadowing opportunities, job internship opportunities, parenting education for pregnant students and students with children under age four, and financial literacy classes. Another community partner provides job shadowing opportunities as well, but also community service activities, family involvement activities, and social and educational referrals for parents of participants. A local substance-abuse prevention organization assists with parent and student education classes related to substance abuse or gang involvement, parental support classes, and professional development for teachers for identifying students who may have a substance abuse problem. Finally, a Latino civil rights and advocacy organization provides training to facilitators carrying out the parent partner program.

Collaborative Pilot Program Implementation

School of Excellence in Education has a clear management plan for the implementation of the Collaborative pilot program. The superintendent manages the Collaborative pilot program. The project director is responsible for overseeing the communication between the district and participating high school and day-to-day activities. Regular communication between school staff and the project director takes place through face-to-face meetings, a web-based workspace, conference calls, and other technology-facilitated communication methods. The project director also coordinates partnerships with community organizations and institutions of higher education. The project director is responsible for establishing timelines, meetings, reporting periods, and project activity evaluations. This individual is responsible for creating materials, submitting project reports, coordinating transportation within the school district, providing outreach materials to parents and students, and coordinating parent information meetings.

Participating students are required to participate in the student-teacher mentor system. This system allows students to build meaningful relationships with adults they can trust, respect, and ask for advice or assistance. These mentoring relationships enable teachers to talk one-on-one with students about successes, challenges, discipline issues, and/or truancy issues. The Collaborative mentors are responsible for assessing their mentee's progress, including their rate of absenteeism, and working in partnership with students to resolve any issues that arise. Due to the high correlation between attendance and school success, the parents/guardians of students with the highest absenteeism are contacted and home visits are scheduled to identify the underlying causes for the high level of absenteeism. Additionally, a parent liaison helps engage parents; a social service referral advisor provides referral services to students and their parents/guardians; and school counselors monitor attendance and provide career counseling.

Barriers to Program Implementation

Barriers to implementing the Collaborative pilot program focus around the poor state of the economy and parent involvement. The grant coordinator and project director agreed that the economy made it difficult for the partners to provide jobs for students because they want to focus on employment opportunities for adults. To try to overcome this challenge, School of Excellence in Education is leaning toward providing volunteer opportunities for the students so that they can

develop their resume. The students are still learning workplace skills even if they are not getting paid.

The principal indicated that parent involvement is always a challenge at the high school. Parent support of any program is important so that students understand the value of participating and how the students will benefit. The principal stated, “Parents don’t understand the value of college. We need to do a better job in explaining ‘college-ready.’” The School of Excellence in Education is trying to overcome this by inviting parents to attend college campus visits and college fairs.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

The School of Excellence in Education’s Collaborative pilot program enjoyed a smooth start and even began ahead of schedule. One teacher believes that the structured regulation for program implementation and encouragement of parent involvement has facilitated the implementation of the program. Another facilitator mentioned by one of the collaborative partners is that meetings with the partners and parents are conducted in English and Spanish so all the participants understand what is being presented. Additionally, the principal acknowledged the importance of receiving grant funding to implement the Collaborative pilot program as they would not have been able to have the program otherwise.

Relationship between Collaborative Staff and Students

The perspective of the School of Excellence in Education, based on comments by interviewed participants, is that the charter district will do whatever it takes to make their students successful. The principal stated that there is an attitude of “we’re all in this together” among the staff. The principal also stated that charter district has been very cooperative and encourages the students to the take the ACCUPLACER test (the admissions test for the dual credit program). One teacher said that the Collaborative staff works hand in hand with the students and it is an “extremely personalized relationship.”

Perceived Effects of Collaborative Pilot Program Activities

The grant coordinator, district administrator, project director, and teachers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that the Collaborative pilot program affected:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills.

Each of these outcomes is discussed in detail.

Academic Achievement

Academic achievement for participating students is on the rise. According to the grant coordinator, 90% of the students taking dual credit courses through the Collaborative pilot program passed those courses. One teacher explained, "The students are starting to see the whole picture of higher education." Data on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores and report cards were not available at the time of the site visit and, therefore, were not collected.

Attendance Improvement

The School of Excellence in Education aims to improve attendance among participating students by having them sign an attendance contract for the school year that allows for only 10 absences. The grant coordinator stated that attendance is at 94% (3-4% higher than last year) and the project director said that in the first semester the high school had a 98% attendance rate.

> *"The students think it is a privilege to be part of this program."*
>
> -Teacher

Improved Behavior

The grant coordinator indicated that behavior has improved in participated students. The students are aware of the high expectations the high school and the college have for them and the students act accordingly. One of the teachers stated, "The students carry themselves differently. They have more pride." In addition, the district administrator believes that the program is the most helpful for students with behavioral problems because they are the biggest challenge in terms of reducing dropout.

> *"There are fewer suspensions because kids know they're being held to a higher standard."*
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Dropout Rates

Among students that are actively participating in the Collaborative pilot program there have been no dropouts; however, some students withdrew from the charter district earlier in the school year. The grant coordinator indicated that students want to come to school now because of this program. However, at the time of the site visit there were no official data on dropout rates. One teacher believes that the dropout rate will decrease because students now know there is something to look forward to beyond the twelfth grade.

> *"Kids used to go to school because they had to. With this program, kids go to school because they want to."*
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Course Completion Rates

The district administrator shared that students are on target in their classes and working towards credit recovery through the dual credit program. Two teachers interviewed agreed that course completion is improving and that using the A+ recovery computer program has helped the students stay focused on their personal goals. One teacher also shared that the Collaborative pilot program provides resources to help students complete their courses, such as tutoring, Saturday school, and one-on-one tutoring. The teacher indicated that participating students are actually taking on a heavier workload because of the program and the support that is available to them.

Improved family support/relationships with family

Supporting families is a primary focus of the School of Excellence in Education's Collaborative pilot program. The grant coordinator stated that the program provides parent education classes such as a session before TAKS on how education affects income levels after graduation. The project director also indicated that a social worker helped to provide food for some needy families.

Some partners also helped families with personal financial management, and have provided financial assistance to pay for utilities. The district administrator stated, "More families are getting students ready for college, such as asking about financial aid, finding out how to send their kids to college, which has been a pleasant surprise." Another partner perceived that the family support/relationships have improved because parent attendance at the organization's sponsored sessions has improved.

College Readiness

The majority of school personnel interviewed indicated that the participating students are college ready due to their attendance at classes at the partnering college. The local college partner stated, "The School of Excellence in Education students become part of the student body and participate in campus activities." However, one teacher indicated that the students "think they are ready" but the teacher believes the students are not because of their maturity level. The teacher perceived that the students are still not ready for the real world.

Technological Knowledge

The School of Excellence in Education's Collaborative pilot program provides students an opportunity to improve their technical skills. Students are learning computer skills by taking a Microsoft course at the local college. Students also send their work to professors electronically. Students can enroll in technology classes such as video/audio engineering and they can participate in the campus radio show. One teacher commented, "We've come a long way. Now we have a DVD yearbook, we use computers for TAKS readiness and a robotics class is now offered." Students also use the A+ computer credit recovery program.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

At the time of site visit, none of the participating students had a job through the Collaborative pilot program due to the poor state of the economy. However, the grant coordinator stated, "There are a number of students on campus who do clerical work and they are dependable and responsible." In addition, two teachers reported that students take more pride in how they are dressed.

Effective Leadership Skills

Some of the students participating in the Collaborative pilot program have become leaders at school or within their group of friends, even encouraging their friends to participate in the program. According to the project director, the improvement of the students' communication skills and self-esteem has led the students to take on a leadership role. One teacher believes there are now more leaders on campus than before implementing the program.

> *"Some kids are pushing other students to participate. Before, students didn't have the self-esteem or communications skills to do this."*
>
> -Project Director

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Emphasis on improving communication skills is important to the School of Excellence in Education. One teacher commented, “Written communications skills especially have improved. The School of Excellence in Education has a very strong writing focus – even math classes require students to write essays and do PowerPoint presentations.” Participation in college-level courses has also helped students with their written communication skills. The grant coordinator indicated that the students’ writing skills have improved. The grant coordinator stated, “Their usual wasn’t enough.” In other words, the students needed to improve their communication skills in order to successfully complete their courses.

Perceived Impact of the Collaborative Pilot Program from Different Perspectives

The grant coordinator, project director, district administrator, principal, teachers, and collaborative partners were asked about the perceived impact of the Collaborative pilot program from their individual perspective. The grant coordinator and district administrator agreed that from a social point of view, the students have benefited from the Collaborative pilot program and are more mature. Additionally, two teachers interviewed agreed that the students have more of a "can-do attitude" and a vision as to what they can achieve.

Students. The principal indicated that for the most part students are positive and appreciative of the Collaborative pilot program. One teacher reported that students appreciate the opportunity to go to college. Another teacher said, "The students said that the program has brought more to their fingertips."

Parents. The principal believes that parents are very happy with the Collaborative pilot program, while the teachers have differing ideas of how the parents believe the program has impacted them. Two of the teachers believe the parents are grateful for the program. One teacher perceived the parents as having a "we owe them attitude."

> *"Parents see the program as a positive thing. Parents who initially resisted because they didn't know how they were going to pay for college are now pushing their kids to be successful. It has lightened their burden."*
>
> -Teacher

Teachers. At the beginning of program implementation, the high school teachers did not understand why certain students were late to class and those teachers were frustrated. Once the teachers understood the program and its requirements, they were not upset. The principal explained, "Some teachers found it difficult to adjust to their students' tardiness when they came back late from [the local college]. They also thought that dual credit was only for high-achieving students." But now, as one teacher stated, "The teachers are very pumped up because of the support team they now have. They are playing more of an active role in the students' success."

Principal. The teachers interviewed agreed that there is support from the principals at the high school. As one teacher stated, "Students receive a lot of support from school leadership. The attitude is that everybody is a team player."

Sustainability and Enhancement

The School of Excellence in Education is committed to continuing the Collaborative pilot program after grant funding ends. The district administrator stated, "Because of the benefits the School of Excellence in Education has received from this program, they are intent on keeping it, either through TEA grants or through local funding … It's too good not to continue." The School of Excellence in Education also wants to continue the partnerships that have been established for the program and even plans to bring in new partners for next year. The collaborative partners also expressed interest in continuing the program. As one of the current partners stated, "We are certainly open to suggestions regarding how to continue the relationship after the grant period ends."

Conclusion

The participants interviewed during the site visit agree that the program has been successful during the first year of implementation and can see the benefit it is providing the participating students and families. The School of Excellence in Education's main challenge is overcoming the poor economy and finding jobs for their students so they may develop valuable workplace skills. Staff were beginning to identify volunteer opportunities for students in place of paying jobs. Students are also being exposed to college through the dual credit program where students attend courses at the college campus and earn both high school and college credits.

Through those experiences and the help of working with a teacher mentor, students are improving their academic achievement, decreasing absences, and improving their behavior. Students are also developing leadership skills and are an example to their friends of how to succeed in school. The students have access to computers and are learning different computer programs and are improving their communication skills. In addition to the benefit for participating students, their families are also benefitting by receiving referrals to social services, receiving financial assistance, attending college visits and career fairs, and attending workshops and meetings from collaborating partners.

Overall, the Collaborative pilot program staff are happy to have the program and are dedicated to sustaining the program beyond the grant period. The School of Excellence in Education will look for additional grants from TEA or other sources to solicit funding for the program and are interested in adding new partners to strengthen programming and their ties to the community.

Evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program Case Study – Edgewood Independent School District (Suburban)

Six of the eligible Texas school districts and open enrollment charter schools were awarded grants by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in amounts ranging from $130,000 to $250,000 for two years (2008–2010) to design and implement a Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) Pilot Program. The overall purpose of the grant is to provide strategies for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

As part of the evaluation of the Collaborative pilot program, case studies of five grantees representing school districts and charter schools were included to provide valuable, in-depth information about the:

- Program structure of the various Collaborative pilot programs
- Barriers and facilitators of the program implementation process
- Perceived effects of the program on students (e.g., attendance improvement, ethical workplace behavior)
- Participants' thoughts about the future of the project (e.g., changes, sustainability).

To develop a comprehensive profile of these five grantees and their implementation of the Collaborative pilot program, data were drawn from multiple sources:

- The grantee application
- Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) (TEA, 2007-08)
- Summary notes from phone interviews about the implementation of the Collaborative pilot program with Collaborative grant coordinators and collaborative partner representatives that took place between December 2008 and February 2009
- Individual interviews conducted during a site visit with key project personnel and participants in each of the five Collaborative pilot programs at their school district/charter school.

To ensure confidentiality, the case studies do not identify individual school districts/charter schools.

Case Study: Edgewood Independent School District

In April 2009, a two-day site visit took place at Edgewood Independent School District (ISD), a suburban school district in south central Texas. Two public high schools participated in the Collaborative program. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the grant coordinator; two administrators, who are directors of the Collaborative pilot program; three teachers; and two collaborative partners. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about Collaborative program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from two telephone interviews conducted in January and February 2009 and Edgewood ISD's grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Edgewood ISD Characteristics

Table 1 provides a summary of Edgewood ISD's Collaborative pilot program including schools, grades, and students served, as well as details of the award.

Table 1: Summary of Edgewood ISD's Collaborative Pilot Program

Community Type	Suburban
Grades Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	2
Type of Schools Served	Public High Schools
Number of Students Served	Up to 80
Grant Amount	$130,000
Start Date	1/2009
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

Schools

Similar to the district at-large, the high schools selected by Edgewood ISD to participate in the Collaborative pilot program have a significantly higher economically disadvantaged and at risk student population than the state's averages. They also have larger concentrations of Hispanic students; however, they have a relatively low percentage of limited English proficient students. Table 2 presents demographic information and risk factors for the targeted schools.

Table 2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2007-08)

School Name	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At risk	Mobility (2005-06)
High School 1	0.8%	97.9%	1.0%	95.2%	7.6%	73.2%	21.6%
High School 2	2.3%	97.2%	0.5%	91.1%	9.2%	76.3%	28.3%
Edgewood ISD	1.3%	97.8%	0.8%	94.5%	19.8%	74.4%	26.5%
Texas	14.3%	47.2%	34.8%	55.3%	16.7%	48.4%	20.9%

Source: AEIS

Overview of Edgewood ISD Collaborative Pilot Program

According to the grant coordinator of the Collaborative pilot program, the goal of Edgewood ISD's program is to reduce dropout and provide students an avenue to graduation. The program should present participating students with career options and provide direct training opportunities. Essentially, Edgewood ISD hopes to give their students the necessary tools they need so they will stay in school and succeed upon graduation.

Program Structure[33]

Edgewood ISD is implementing a branded dropout prevention program for their Collaborative pilot program. This program serves 80 students in Grades 9-12 at two public high schools. The students are selected through an application process; they must be at risk for not graduating with their four-year cohort and meet at least two of the following criteria:

- Are 16+ years of age
- Have 8+ high school credits
- Have not mastered one or more Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams
- Are over age, under credited, and at risk of dropping out
- Exhibit an attendance problem.

The selection process is finalized with a conference attended by the parent/guardian, student, and campus review committee where the participants sign a letter of agreement. The Collaborative pilot program uses district assessments, TAKS data, and coursework achievement data for decision-making in implementing a student's individual graduation plan, course study, and/or intervention. The academic program for the Collaborative pilot program consists of an online curriculum-based program, *Odyssey Ware*; seminars; and TAKS preparation classes.

Classes are provided at the partnering education and training center in learning communities with a class size ratio of one teacher for ten students and includes a tutoring program staffed by certified teachers. Students are able to take college courses and college placement exams while enrolled in the program. Additionally, workforce training programs with certifications, career exploration, field trips, and counseling and social support services are also offered. In an effort to improve attendance, Edgewood ISD has implemented a number of truancy prevention efforts including, but not limited to attendance warning letters; parental workshops entitled, *How to Improve Student Attendance*; flexible academic scheduling; and free childcare.

Collaborative Partners

> *"We can call on them [our partners] for help and they will produce."*
>
> -Administrator

Edgewood ISD partnered with a local community college, a city government organization, a community nonprofit organization, and an education and training center, where the Collaborative pilot program is housed. Edgewood ISD, the community college, and community nonprofit work together to help guide students to select career pathways. As a part of this, workforce trainings and industry certificate programs are offered through a flexible schedule. Training programs offered include certified nurses' assistant and production work/forklift operator, among others. Upon

[33] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

completing this training, students will be matched or placed into internships or an appropriate industry job. The community nonprofit also provides job application assistance and support for family needs such as food stamps, utility assistance, or credit repair. The city government organization will provide presentations on anger management, social services for students and their families, and network referrals for community activities and resources; however, the partner had not started providing these services at the time of the site visit. Meetings with the project partners are held every six weeks to ensure proper coordination of the grant's goals, objectives, and resources.

Collaborative Pilot Program Implementation

The Collaborative pilot program is implemented through a clear management structure. The grant coordinator of the Collaborative pilot program facilitates the planning and development of the program and works with the high school campuses to identify potential participants. One of the interviewed administrators serves as the manager of all grant activities, including resource and budget management. This administrator also compiles progress reports; evaluates the grant program, campus, and department performances; and is responsible for developing and maintaining partnerships with community, city, and state organizations.

Internal communication primarily takes place through memos, e-mails, and face-to-face meetings. Additionally, the steering committee and high school principals meet on a monthly basis to review project progress. The steering committee is made up of a district leadership team. The grant coordinator is responsible for reporting daily management activities to the steering committee; reports such as student attendance, credit accrual, workforce training, and coordination of support services are provided. In addition, the grant coordinator meets with Collaborative pilot program staff on a weekly basis to ensure the program is successfully meeting its goals. The acting lead teacher at the education and training center campus takes care of day-to-day operations on campus, such as monitoring student credit recovery and course completion, attendance, and TAKS tutoring.

While the Collaborative pilot program is located at the education and training center, the selection process is done at the individual high school. Once the students are selected, they go to the training and education center campus. The students attend the program five days a week, with a minimum of four hours daily. The program is offered year round and is an individualized, self-paced program done on the computer with the *Odyssey Ware* software.

Barriers to Program Implementation

The implementation of the Collaborative pilot program was difficult at the beginning of the school year due to major key staff changes. As a result, Edgewood ISD was not able to start the Collaborative pilot program until January 2009 (Edgewood ISD planned to start in August 2008). The shift of key positions at the district level caused an inconsistent understanding of the purpose of the grant. This issue was resolved over time. The grant coordinator and both administrators agreed that finding a lead teacher and project coordinator for the education and training center campus was a challenge; however, at the time of the site visit, the district had overcome this challenge and hired a lead teacher.

In addition to the staffing difficulties, two teachers agreed that lack of communication with parents is a challenge. One of the teachers noted that the parents do not understand the Collaborative pilot program and wonder why they should send their child to the education and training center campus. The teachers explain the benefit to parents every chance they receive. One administrator also indicated that transportation for some students to the education and training center campus was a barrier, but the school district furnished bus passes for the students and attendance improved.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

> *"We firmly believe we need to work in a collaborative fashion to create successful change. People want and need the services that are out in our community."*
>
> -Collaborative Partner

While barriers to implementation challenged program staff, good communication between the district and its partners facilitated a good relationship and, later, the implementation of the program. Communication between Edgewood ISD and their partners is supported by meetings, e-mail, and phone calls. One partner reported that bringing resources together for the Collaborative pilot program builds a relationship with the community and school district. The administrators also agreed that staff working well together facilitates the success of the program. The collaborative relationships built through the Collaborative pilot program bring needed services to students and families. One administrator stated that this vision of bringing needed services to families keeps staff motivated.

Relationship between Collaborative Staff and Students

The relationship between Collaborative staff and participating students was described as very good. One teacher stated, "Our student population requires a lot of interaction and even intrusive advising. This program allows us to get involved and gives the students the opportunity to turn the page and start again." Another teacher stated, "We all work very hard to keep the students in school." However, a limiting factor identified by one teacher was the mindset of some students. These students lacked exposure to the world outside their community and could not envision themselves leaving. One teacher reported that the students do not think they can make a difference in their own life. The district overcame this challenge by planning college field trips so that the students were encouraged to see the world around them in a different light.

Perceived Effects of Collaborative Pilot Program Activities

The grant coordinator, administrators, and teachers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that the Collaborative pilot program affected:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills.

Each of these outcomes is discussed in detail.

Academic Achievement

All of the interviewed participants agreed that academic achievement among participating students has improved and more courses have been completed. One teacher also perceived the students as being more responsible for their grades. Consensus among the grant coordinator and administrators indicates that academic achievement is improving because the students are gaining confidence with each course they complete. In addition, one of the partners added that academic achievement was improving because the students' attitudes have changed now that they are in a higher education atmosphere at the education and training center versus the high school campus.

Attendance Improvement

Participating students' attendance has improved as a result of the Collaborative pilot program. According to the administrators, before the program began, a big factor contributing to low attendance was the feeling of the students "being policed" at their high school campus, but now at the education and training center they are treated like adults. One teacher reported that attendance has improved because "of the flexible school schedule" available to them. The Collaborative pilot program also offers free childcare to encourage better attendance.

Improved Behavior

According to the interviewed participants, the behavior of participating students has improved. An example cited was the issue of "tagging" (graffiti) the school walls. One administrator explained, "We counseled the students and kept talking to them and they eventually began self-policing. The tagging stopped and the students came to us with the idea of putting canvases in the reception area. We did this and it then it turned into an art contest, and now we have beautiful murals on the walls." The majority of teachers also agreed that student behavior has improved. The teachers believe that the students are more responsible and seem to be in "catch-up mode" with their grades and credit recovery.

Dropout Rates

Data on dropout rates was not available at the time of the site visit and, therefore, was not collected. However, one administrator felt that the students wanted to be at school more based on their attitude and attendance. Each of the teachers interviewed believe that the dropout rate is less. One teacher stated that Collaborative staff are engaging students that dropped out of school in their community and encouraging the students to attend Saturday school or night school to earn credits.

Course Completion Rates

All interviewed participants agree that course completion rates are increasing as a result of the Collaborative pilot program. The interviewed participants indicated that having a timeline for students to pace their self-learning is helping the completion rate. One teacher reported that the computer labs at the education and training campus are full after school because the students are coming in to complete course work. The grant coordinator shared that the teachers at the education and training center use a "credit thermometer" to show students the credits they have completed. This gauge allows students to see the progress they have made toward their goals.

Improved family support/relationships with family

Improvement in this outcome is difficult to identify because the local government organization has not started the parent workshops yet, but one administrator stated that the parents are now dropping their children off at school. This level of involvement was not always present prior to the Collaborative pilot program.

College Readiness

The grant coordinator and administrators agree that the college environment at the education and training center campus is helping to instill the idea of higher learning in the participating students. Some of the students even want to pursue college courses now. Additionally, two of the teachers interviewed believe that the participating students want to further their education beyond high school as evidenced by their work toward recovering credits.

Technological Knowledge

Access to computers has increased for participating students; however, it is difficult to gauge whether their technological knowledge has improved. The education and training center has three computer labs and one administrator noted that the students work on the computers for credit. One partner also reported that the students were doing more searches on the computers and they have access to Microsoft Office programs. A partner observed that the students ask more computer-related questions and ask for help with Internet searches. One teacher added that students are using e-mail for lessons and creating PowerPoint presentations.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

The education and training center campus is utilized as a workplace to show students how to act in a work environment. One administrator said, “We have tried to mirror the fact that their primary job is school.” Students that attend the education and training center have behaved appropriately. One teacher indicated that the participating students have more pride in their overall behavior.

Effective Leadership Skills

Natural leadership was starting to emerge in some participating students as they progressed through the Collaborative pilot program. The grant coordinator and administrators reported that the students’ leadership skills have improved; they are becoming advocates for themselves. One teacher reported that some of the students’ leadership skills have increased and gave the example of one student organizing the *Edgewood Helping Hands* group that collects clothing for needy families in the community. Another teacher believed that leadership skills were still developing as students are trying to grapple with finishing their classes and recovering credits.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

There was no hard evidence at the time of the site visit that oral and written communication skills are improving. One administrator indicated that they would know more about this after TAKS scores are reported. A teacher stated that, in general, there has been an improvement, especially with simple things like saying good morning when students enter a room.

Perceived Impact of the Collaborative Pilot Program from Different Perspectives

> *"Some of the students have families of their own and if we can touch this generation of students, they will be good role models for their kids."*
>
> -Administrator

The grant coordinator, administrators, teachers, and collaborative partners were asked about the perceived impact of the Collaborative pilot program from their individual perspective. One administrator believes that because of this program, the students now believe that there are adults who have faith in them. The grant coordinator and administrators reported that the students' self esteem has increased and they see they can accomplish more. Additionally, one teacher indicated that some of the students have graduated from the education and training center campus and the teacher identified other students that are prepared to graduate. The majority of teachers noticed that the students had better attitudes toward the teachers; relationships were built and students learned that the teachers are trying to help them.

Students. One of the teachers reported that the students at the education and training center campus were bragging to their friends about participating in the program. The students' friends became interested in joining the program as a result. The teacher remarked, "They do the marketing for me." Another teacher reported that some of the students who graduated said that if it had not been for the program, they would not have finished their course requirements.

Parents. There has been very little feedback from parents; however, one teacher commented that many parents called and thanked the teacher for getting their child involved. According to another teacher, some parents knew that this was the last chance for their children to graduate. The teacher stated, "Most parents were only worried about their kids graduating and did not have time to communicate about the Collaborative." The teachers are working to reach the parents to educate them about the Collaborative pilot program.

Teachers. The interviewed teachers reported that other teachers at the high school like the program and always inquire about their students. One teacher indicated that the other teachers did not understand the Collaborative pilot program at first, but they began to appreciate the program once they understood its goals and how it works.

Principals. All interviewed teachers agreed that the principals were supportive of the Collaborative pilot program.

Sustainability and Enhancement

> *"We are going to keep doing this even if the grant ends. I think folks here are very committed to this program and want to see it continue."*
>
> -Collaborative Partner

Edgewood ISD is very interested in continuing the Collaborative pilot program beyond the grant period. Funding from the district beyond the grant period can be a combination of state compensatory and local monies. One administrator would like to expand workforce readiness courses to include topics such as culinary, nursing, and auto mechanics. Both partners reported that their services are not connected to grant money and they will continue to participate. The partners are aware of the benefit this program provides the community and they are committed to maintaining the partnership and helping families.

Conclusion

Overall, the interviewed participants are happy with the Collaborative pilot program and believe it is positively affecting participating students. After a difficult start for the program that pushed the start date to January 2009, it has largely succeeded in keeping students engaged in school and improving their academic achievement. Edgewood ISD's Collaborative pilot program is housed at a local education and training center that is monitored by the grant coordinator and lead teacher. It was reported that students are increasingly recovering credits, attending class, and completing courses. In addition, attending the education and training center has exposed participating students to a higher education setting and encouraged students to think about going to college.

Effects on ethical workplace behavior, communication skills, and technological knowledge were difficult to judge at the time of the site visit. In addition, the family component of the Collaborative pilot program was not being implemented. The local government organization partner is planning to provide workshops for parents and families that will address this in the future. In terms of the future of the Collaborative pilot program, Edgewood ISD is planning to sustain the program beyond the grant period. The collaborating partners also indicated that they would like to continue the program beyond the grant. In the end, participants indicated that they liked the Collaborative pilot program and even though it is was not being fully implemented as planned, they believe it was benefitting the participating students.

Evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program Case Study – Brownsville Independent School District (Urban)

Six of the eligible Texas school districts and open enrollment charter schools were awarded grants by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in amounts ranging from $130,000 to $250,000 for two years (2008–2010) to design and implement a Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) Pilot Program. The overall purpose of the grant is to provide strategies for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

As part of the evaluation of the Collaborative pilot program, case studies of five grantees representing school districts and charter schools were included to provide valuable, in-depth information about the:

- Program structure of the various Collaborative pilot programs
- Barriers and facilitators of the program implementation process
- Perceived effects of the program on students (e.g., attendance improvement, ethical workplace behavior)
- Participants' thoughts about the future of the project (e.g., changes, sustainability).

To develop a comprehensive profile of these five grantees and their implementation of the Collaborative pilot program, data were drawn from multiple sources:

- The grantee application
- Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) (TEA, 2007-08)
- Summary notes from phone interviews about the implementation of the Collaborative pilot program with Collaborative grant coordinators and collaborative partner representatives that took place between December 2008 and February 2009
- Individual interviews conducted during a site visit with key project personnel and participants in each of the five Collaborative pilot programs at their school district/charter school.

To ensure confidentiality, the case studies do not identify individual school districts/charter schools.

Case Study: Brownsville Independent School District

A two-day site visit at Brownsville Independent School District (ISD) took place in April 2009. Brownsville ISD is an urban school district in southern Texas. Five public high schools participated in the Collaborative program. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with five collaborative partners and group interviews with four high school dropout teams (three public high schools and one alternative high school). The high school dropout teams varied across schools but generally consisted of a school administrator, counselors, dropout specialists, a probation officer, and sometimes teachers. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about Collaborative program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from a telephone interview conducted in January 2009 and Brownsville ISD's grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Brownsville ISD Characteristics

A summary of Brownsville ISD's Collaborative pilot program including schools, grades served, and students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Brownsville ISD's Collaborative Pilot Program

Community Type	Urban
Grades Served	12
Number of Schools Served	5
Type of Schools Served	5 Public High Schools
Number of Students Served	Up to 500
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	8/1/2008
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

Schools

With the exception of one high school, the high schools selected by Brownsville ISD to participate in the Collaborative pilot program have a significantly higher proportion of at risk and economically disadvantaged student populations than the state as a whole. They also have larger concentrations of minority students (Hispanic). Table 2 presents demographic information and risk factors for the targeted schools.

Table 2: Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2007-08)

School Name	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At risk	Mobility (2005-06)
High School 1	0.1%	94.4%	4.2%	86.4%	14.1%	49.0%	17.4%
High School 2	0.0%	98.9%	1.1%	98.5%	28.9%	85.0%	21.6%
High School 3	0.0%	98.9%	0.9%	98.7%	25.3%	71.9%	22.5%
High School 4	0.3%	96.9%	2.5%	96.8%	18.7%	69.3%	19.6%
High School 5	0.4%	98.4%	1.1%	99.0%	20.5%	67.0%	20.3%
Brownsville ISD	0.2%	98.0%	1.5%	94.5%	42.4%	68.7%	20.0%
Texas	14.3%	47.2%	34.8%	55.3%	16.7%	48.4%	20.9%

Source: AEIS

Overview of Brownsville ISD Collaborative Pilot Program

Brownsville ISD's Collaborative pilot program has several goals. The top priority of the program is to keep students in school and give them the skills they need to attend college upon graduation. In addition to staying in school, Brownsville ISD is also focused on decreasing juvenile crime among participating students. The presence of probation officers on campus is intended to serve as a deterrent and to help monitor students already on probation. Brownsville ISD is also trying to increase family involvement through increased contact with parents and guardians.

Program Structure[34]

Brownsville ISD is implementing the Collaborative pilot program in five public high schools. As previously mentioned, the goal of the Collaborative pilot program is to promote college and workforce readiness to at risk students. Brownsville ISD indicated in their grant application that the dropout strategies incorporated into the Collaborative pilot program include: rigorous college preparation; purposeful student engagement with the participating community entities; individualized learning experiences; and structured support systems which seek to assist students in completing their four-year graduation plan and/or with the ultimate goal of enrolling students in postsecondary instruction of higher learning.

The program targets fourth year students on probation, students who have dropped out, and students at risk of dropping out. The program is scheduled to occur during the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years; however, as the program demonstrates success Brownsville ISD plans on further expansion. Specifically, the program includes English language arts, mathematics, and science curriculums with tutorial sessions covering the writing, reading, mathematics, and scientific skills needed for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and Campus College Readiness Test. The program also has a parental involvement component aimed at increasing parental knowledge of high school standards, college standards, and financial aid opportunities.

Collaborative Partners

Brownsville ISD has four main partners for the Collaborative pilot program: a local university, the local juvenile justice department, the local chamber of commerce, and a county workforce organization. The university partner facilitates Brownsville ISD's instruction of dual enrollment courses. As part of this, the university provides a *Go Center* station at each of the participating high schools to assist with the college application process. The university also administers the Compass E-write test and the Ability to Benefit Test, which enables passing students to access financial aid for college. The local juvenile justice department has a probation officer placed in participating schools to ensure that students who are on probation participate as needed in tutorial and mentoring sessions. At risk counselors work with these probation officers to ensure that personal graduation plans for these students are developed and implemented. The local county workforce organization conducts application orientation for qualifying students and the chamber of commerce is providing a minimum of 15 mentors for students involved in the program. Students are matched with these mentors based on career interests. In addition, Brownsville ISD partners with a local dropout prevention program that operates in the high schools.

[34] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

Collaborative Pilot Program Implementation

The Collaborative pilot program is implemented in five high schools in the district and has a number of academic and workforce skill development components. In addition to a mentoring program for at risk students, all participating high schools have a career placement officer dedicated to ensuring that all students have an identified career area. Participating high schools also provide a number of entry-level certifications and students who have room in their schedules can participate in job and co-op classes. Academic components include tutoring, course recovery and reentry, and academic acceleration. After school and/or Saturday tutorials are provided to all students at each participating high school.

Course recovery is offered via individualized American Preparatory Institute (API) modules and computer-based instruction through the Student Taught in Alternative Route to Success (STARS) program. STARS is a competency-based, self-paced, alternative program for students who have fallen behind in credits and/or who may not graduate on or near their projected four year graduation date. The API models are TEKS based and approved through the Southern Association of College and Schools. Academic acceleration and reentry is provided at each high school. Additionally, there is an alternative high school campus that provides a smaller student to teacher ratio for students identified as at risk for dropout or who had previously dropped out.

Finally, there is another alternative school specifically designed to meet the needs of pregnant students. This school also provides parenting classes and other parenting services on campus. Home instruction services are being piloted for pregnant students who do not want to attend the alternative school. Additionally, Brownsville ISD is piloting a program to train parents in the following areas: alcohol and substance abuse awareness; rules and guidelines for the home environment; low self-esteem; personal graduation plans; and college application and financial aid assistance. Brownsville ISD is also working to have joint parent and student meetings once every other month and guest speakers once a month to target the requests and interests of the students.

Barriers to Program Implementation

Brownsville ISD's Collaborative pilot program has been mostly successful; however, participants did indicate they encountered some barriers to implementation. One probation officer explained that, due to privacy laws, the probation officers cannot release information about a student to school counselors and this made it difficult to help the students. The school counselors often did not know why the student was on probation. To address this barrier, the probation officers give the students an option to discuss their background with the school counselors themselves. Additionally, two teachers, who were part of their campus dropout team, agreed that the Collaborative pilot program needed to reach more students who could benefit from additional help and support. The grant only covers 100 students per school and more students are in need. Hiring extra personnel would address this barrier.

One of the partners of the Collaborative pilot program encountered different challenges. The chamber of commerce participant indicated one barrier is that business people "just want to get things done" and it is hard to understand that things take time to get started. Because the Collaborative pilot program is new, it presented a challenge because both the schools and the chamber of commerce were trying to understand each other and their role in the program.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

The successful implementation of the Collaborative pilot program hinges on each high school's dropout team. The dropout team is made up of school administrators, counselors, probation officers, and sometimes teachers and members of the local dropout prevention program. The dropout teams interviewed from the three high schools visited during the site visit agreed that the teams on each campus should remain intact. They communicate openly with each other and work together for their students. As one team member said, "We are a good team. We have an open door policy with each other."

> *"The awareness for each of their [dropout] team members and the evolution in the relationship between the counselors and probation officers facilitated the implementation of the grant. Now there is respect between the two groups and a lot has been accomplished in eight months."*
>
> -Juvenile Justice Partner

The chamber of commerce partner stated that the biggest facilitator has been the desire and willingness by the students, the business community, and the school. The partner contends that the Collaborative pilot program could not be as successful without it. The local dropout prevention program partner shared that most of the administrators are supportive to their team and to the Collaborative pilot program. The principals often refer students to the program knowing they can come to the team for help.

Relationship between Collaborative Staff and Students

The relationships between the dropout teams and students have blossomed over the course of the grant period. The dropout teams from the three high schools interviewed stated that the students trust them and they know they are there to help them. As one dropout team member said, "The students have lived a life of being told 'later; we will help later; you will get this later; etc.' Our response to them is immediate. They are able to get assistance with paperwork, get resources and academic help immediately. The students trust us to help them." This trust is integral to the success of the Collaborative pilot program at Brownsville ISD.

Perceived Effects of Collaborative Pilot Program Activities

The dropout teams and collaborative partners discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that the Collaborative pilot program affected:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills.

Each of these outcomes is discussed in detail.

Academic Achievement

According to all of the interviewed participants, the students' academic achievement has improved due to recovering credits. As one dropout team member said, "Many students have now recovered credits to be in the grade level they belong." Two partners shared that most of the students' grades have improved and added that a lot of them are set to graduate this year. The participant from the university partner stated that the academic achievement of the Collaborative students has been impacted. The number of students needing remedial courses has decreased.

> *"The numbers of students coming to our program needing [remedial] work has gone down considerably. The average GPA at the end of the freshman year and retention is higher – 75% vs. 50%."*
>
> -Local University Partner

Attendance Improvement

As a result of the Collaborative pilot program, attendance among the participating students has improved. The participants from one of the high school dropout teams and from the alternative school agreed that attendance has improved since the campus probation officer helped get the students back to school. If students are on probation, their attendance is attached to probation requirements. Two Collaborative partners also agreed that attendance has improved due to the presence of an on-site probation officer and now that attendance is monitored closely by the dropout team. One of the high school droput teams shared that attendance has improved because they now have an attendance contract with the participating students.

Improved Behavior

According to each of the high school dropout teams, behavior has improved among the participating students. As the alternative school participant explained, "There were 300 students here on campus and now they have 259. This shows that student behaviors have changed because they are not returning to this campus." The local dropout prevention partner shared that behavior had improved slightly, then continued saying that by the time the students are referred to their team, they are given one-on-one attention and behavior does get better.

The juvenile justice participants also see that behavior has improved. One participant from the juvenile justice partner explained that a teacher shared that before the grant they would have to go through the school secretaries to get a student's bad behavior addressed, which sometimes took a long time. The participant continued by adding, "Now when students misbehave, there is an immediate response, which has made students see the connection between their behaviors and the immediate consequences."

Dropout Rates

Decreasing dropouts is the main goal of the Collaborative pilot program and it appears to be effective at this point. One high school dropout team shared that their graduation rate increased by 7%. The alternative school has not had any participating students drop out this year. The local dropout prevention partner stated that they do not let the students drop out because they give their students various options. For example, some of the options they offer are: high school courses at the local university for over-aged students rather than at their home campus and introducing Job Corps to the students. A participant from the dropout prevention partner stated, "At [this high

school] we had 168 dropout students and we were able to recover 98." Official data on Brownsville ISD's dropout rate was not available at the time of the site visit and, therefore, was not collected.

Course Completion Rates

All the high school dropout teams interviewed stated that course completion rates have improved. Each team works closely with the students to ensure the students are working toward graduation. One high school dropout team shared that some of the students reported that they are now caught up with their course work. The dropout prevention partner stated that they see an improvement in the course completion rate because they work as a team to keep students on track and they generate reports to follow the students' grades.

Improved family support/relationships with family

Parent involvement is seemingly improving for participating families. The juvenile justice participants reported that the parents are calling more often and are involved in the program. In addition, some parents are visiting with the probation officers which the students seem to appreciate. The dropout prevention partner indicated that they have a program for parents which helps parents understand how some of the decisions they made in the past affected their child. The participant stated, "It helps them learn a lot about themselves. The parents that attended said they enjoyed this class." However, the dropout prevention partner stated that they only perceive some improvement in family relationships. The dropout prevention partner indicated that parental involvement is very low so it is hard to see if there is improvement.

> *"It means a lot to the kids to see their parents come in and take time to hear about their lives with probation officers."*
>
> -Juvenile Justice Partner

College Readiness

The dropout team participants all agreed that the students are showing interest in college and more students are asking for financial aid information. A participant from the dropout prevention partner shared that they have registered 565 students for financial aid. The juvenile justice partner participants stated that they have an office that students can go to and fill out financial aid papers and college applications.

> *"One student we didn't think would graduate from high school now wants to go to college. We asked him what he wants to be and told us he wants to be a mechanical engineer."*
>
> -High School Dropout Team Member

Additionally, Brownsville ISD was a 2008 recipient of the Broad Scholarship and won one million dollars in scholarships for their students. The scholarships are for students that showed the most progress and many of the Collaborative pilot program participants are eligible. Some of the students that were at risk of dropping out are showing a sincere desire to attend college. One of the high school dropout team participants shared, "Other students are seeing students that were 'bad' or 'at risk' are now getting into college. They see this as a possibility for them." In this regard, the Collaborative pilot program is influencing other students within the high school by providing role models for the student body.

Technological Knowledge

Technological knowledge among the participating students is improving according to the high school dropout teams. The students are applying for college using computers and have learned to

use spreadsheets in their classes. The local university shared that they had to modify their computer curriculum because the students in public school had more computer technology knowledge than they had anticipated.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Data on improved workplace behaviors is not readily available to participants. However, two of the three high school dropout teams stated that many of the students are working and there have been no complaints from their bosses. The counselor from one high school dropout team said, “I run students through simulations and critique clothes and talk to students who need guidance.” The alternative school participants explained that they help locate jobs for some students and many of these students already work in the evenings.

Effective Leadership Skills

Participating students are developing leadership skills while in the Collaborative pilot program. One high school dropout team explained that the Collaborative students are becoming more responsible for their academic achievements and this has helped increase leadership skills. In addition, many students are now referring other students to the Collaborative pilot program. The alternative school also agreed that leadership skills have improved and shared that their students are organized into platoons and each student gets to take on leadership roles within their platoon.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Communication is a vital component for succeeding in college and the workplace. The Collaborative pilot program students are strengthening their communication skills in a variety of ways. The participants from one high school dropout team explained that students are required to attend tutorials and indicated that the students are more confident in communicating with teachers and other faculty now. The dropout team from another high school stated that communication skills of the Collaborative students are noticeably improving. Furthermore, the university participant interviewed explained that the students coming from public schools are coming in better prepared in the area of communication.

Perceived Impact of the Collaborative Pilot Program from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the high school dropout teams and collaborative partners were asked about the perceived impact of the Collaborative pilot program from their individual perspective. The dropout team from one high school shared that they have an excellent rapport with the campus teachers and have noticed that the Collaborative students seem to have more confidence and increased self-esteem. Another high school dropout team stated that the Collaborative pilot program teaches students the skills to succeed and each student who succeeds can become a role model for other students. The alternative school participants explained that having a probation officer on campus was the biggest facilitator towards change. They continued by stating the probation officer not only brings the Collaborative students who drop out of school back into the system, but also monitors the students for behavior and academic improvement.

Students. The impact on students appears to be strong. One high school dropout team recalled a Collaborative student that stated that if it was not for the Collaborative pilot program, the student

would not show up for school. The dropout team from another high school shared that some of the Collaborative students from another participating school have referred their friends to the program, especially if those friends wanted to skip school.

Parents. The high school dropout teams agreed that the parents are involved in the program. One high school team shared that they have a parent center and this has helped the parents communicate with the school. The parents realize this program is important for their children. The alternative school shared that they have parent group meetings every week. Some parents whose child has already left are still enjoying coming to the parent meetings. A participant from another high school stated, "Parents love the program and are grateful that the team helps in every way they can to help their child graduate. Parents appreciate the extra mile the team goes to for their child. When we call the parents for something, they are there."

> *"Parents are really in contact with the program because they understand how important the program is for their children."*
>
> -High School Dropout Team Member

Teachers. Teachers appear to be thankful and appreciative of the Collaborative pilot program. One high school dropout team shared that the request from teachers to remove a student from their class has decreased, "This year there were only one or two requests. The teachers' attitudes are better now toward students that are returning for credit recovery." The teachers are even e-mailing dropout team members to let them know what is going on with a particular student. Another high school dropout team noted that some teachers are now calling the counselors to check up on individual students.

Principals. The school administrators are supportive of the Collaborative pilot program. One high school dropout team stated that the administration is very helpful. They stated, "The principals are very grateful for the program and that the students are getting help for their problems." Another dropout team shared that the principal indicated that he will do whatever needs to be done to support the Collaborative pilot program in his school.

Sustainability and Enhancement

The sustainability of the Collaborative pilot program beyond the grant period is uncertain. The dropout prevention partner shared that some discussions have taken place with the district about sustainability but did not have any details regarding the outcome. Some of the participants are more occupied with getting the program off the ground and have not thought about how to sustain the program at the time of the site visit. The chamber of commerce participant stated, "The chamber of commerce is focusing on getting the program up and running right now." However, the juvenile justice partner stated that they are hoping to raise funds from the private business community to help support the program. The district and partners are currently evaluating their options for sustaining the Collaborative pilot program.

Conclusion

Brownsville ISD's Collaborative pilot program was largely successful during the first year of implementation according to the interviewed participants. Participating students have recovered necessary credits towards graduation and many of them are prepared to graduate at the end of this school year. As part of the Collaborative program students are paired with mentors and career placement specialists to support them as they finish high school. In addition, students have access to self-paced, computer-based educational programs that help them recover credits and accelerate learning. Each high school also has a dropout team that works to ensure that the program components are being implemented with each partner working together and monitoring students'

progress. Students with criminal records also have the support of having a probation officer on campus that can work with them to reduce recidivism and successfully complete their probation. One challenge for the probation officers is sharing personal information with school counselors. To address this, the probation officer gives the students an opportunity to share their background with the counselors on their own.

Another challenge to implementation includes the need to reach more students at each school. Even with the aforementioned challenges, the Collaborative pilot program is achieving its goals of keeping students in school. According to the participants, students are attending school more often, recovering credits towards graduation, completing required courses, and getting ready for college. Participating students are also becoming leaders on campus and referring their friends to the program. The students can communicate more effectively and are increasing their technical knowledge. Families of participating students are also benefitting from the program by attending partnering organizations' workshops and by being more involved with their children's academic career. While the future of the program is uncertain at this time, the participants agree that it is benefitting students and they are willing to work together to see it continue beyond the grant period.

Appendix C: Collaborative Interview Protocols

Collaborative Dropout Reduction
Joint Telephone Interview Protocol: Collaborative Grant Project Coordinator AND Community Partner Representative

General Information about Your Collaborative Project
General questions about your project to get a sense of your vision of your Collaborative project and any modifications you have experienced since implementing the project.

1. Briefly, in a few sentences, how would each of you describe the overall purpose of your Collaborative project?

2. In what ways, if at all, has your Collaborative project changed from what you originally proposed in your grant application?
    a. Are you planning to make any changes in the future?

Organization and Individual Participation in Your Collaborative Project
Questions related to who is participating.

3. FOR DISTRICT PERSONNEL: Do you serve as the grant manager or project director for your Collaborative project?
    a. If so, what are your roles and responsibilities for your Collaborative project?

4. FOR PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE: What contributions and services do you provide for your Collaborative project?

5. Are there other individuals who are key personnel for your Collaborative project?
    a. If so, what are their roles and responsibilities in your Collaborative project?

6. Which organizations that are participating in your Collaborative project do you have formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or other formal agreements with, and what are the contributions (cash and/or in-kind) and services provided by each organization?

	Organization Name	Brief Description of Contributions and Services
Local Businesses		
Other Local Governments/ Law Enforcement Agencies		
Nonprofit Organizations		
Faith-based Organizations		
Institutions of Higher Education		

7. Are there any other people who are involved in your Collaborative project who we should interview?

8. Are there any other organizations with which you are trying to partner? If so, please list and briefly describe the contributions and services you have in mind for them?

Components of Your Collaborative Project

Questions related to actual components of your Collaborative project in terms of the types of strategies that you are using.

9. What strategies are you implementing as part of your Collaborative Project?
    a. Workforce Skill Development – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Paid employment
        - ☐ Internship opportunities
        - ☐ Advanced career and vocational training
        - ☐ Cooperative education programs
        - ☐ Job shadowing
        - ☐ Mentoring
        - ☐ Career guidance
        - ☐ Other workforce skill development strategies (please specify)

          _____
    b. Academic Support – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Tutoring programs
        - ☐ Credit recovery and reentry
        - ☐ Academic acceleration
        - ☐ Active learning strategies
        - ☐ Career and technical education
        - ☐ Individualized education/graduation plans
        - ☐ Use of educational technology/software
        - ☐ Peer-to-peer tutoring
        - ☐ Teacher professional development
        - ☐ Other academic support strategies (please specify)

          _____
    c. Attendance Improvement – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Truancy and attendance intervention
        - ☐ Incentive programs
        - ☐ Activities designed to foster student/school engagement
        - ☐ Positive behavior support
        - ☐ Other strategies designed to increase school attendance and reduce truancy and tardiness (please specify) _____

          _____
    d. Student & Family Support Service – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Social student needs
        - ☐ Emotional student needs
        - ☐ Personal student needs
            - o Health issues
            - o Emotional health needs
            - o Mental health needs
            - o Family concerns
            - o Substance abuse
            - o Involvement with the juvenile justice system
            - o Pregnancy prevention/services
            - o Other issues that may prevent or hinder student academic performance and success
        - ☐ Other strategies (please specify) _____

10. When do you start – or when did you start – serving students?

11. How do you identify students for inclusion into your program? In other words, which students were targeted to participate?
    a. Once students are identified, what steps do you take to recruit and enroll them in your program?

12. In what ways, if any, are you monitoring student outcomes before and after program implementation?

13. From each of your perspectives, how do you feel about the way your Collaborative project has been implemented so far?
    a. How has the partnership between the district and the partner organization(s) been working out?

14. What barriers or challenges, if any, have you faced during the implementation of your Collaborative project?
    a. If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

15. What factors, if any, do you believe are helping you to facilitate the implementation of your Collaborative project?

16. What else would you like to add about the implementation of your Collaborative project?

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Grant Coordinator Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are the grant coordinator we interviewed in December 2008/January 2009.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain further information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district.

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Program Information
First, I would like to discuss with you the demographics/characteristics of your students and the schools served, as well as gather information about the implementation of your Collaborative program.

1. Why did your district decide to apply for the Collaborative grant? In other words, please state why you need the grant.

2. What are the characteristics of the schools served through the Collaborative program?
   Probe: How did you determine what schools to serve?

3. How is the program implemented at each school?
   Probe: Are there any variations in implementation at each school?

4. During the phone interview in December/January, you discussed facilitators and barriers to implementing the Collaborative program (*have previous answers ready*).
   a) Are there any new factors helping to facilitate the implementation of the Collaborative program?
   b) Are there any new barriers you have encountered? If so, how have you addressed these barriers?

5. How would you characterize the students who participate in your Collaborative program (e.g., grade level(s), socioeconomic status, risk factors)?
   Probe: Are you successful in enrolling students with targeted characteristics, or is your student population different than you expected/intended?
   Probe: Are students enrolled on a rolling admissions basis or have the same student been participating all throughout?

Section 2: Partnerships
Next, I would like to learn about your relationship with your community partners.

6. How did you identify community partners for the Collaborative grant?

7. During the phone interview in December/January, you listed the following partnering organizations [NOTE: INSERT PARTNER NAMES]:
   a) Have you added any additional partners?
   b) Have you ended your partnership with any organizations? If so, why?

8. Based on your survey rating (Q2), how would you characterize your relationship with your partner organization(s)?
    a) How do these partner organizations contribute to the Collaborative program?
    b) What are the main challenges, if any, you face in working with them? How have you addressed these challenges?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on participating students.

9. About how many (and what percentage of) students in each grade level participate/attend Collaborative program activities?

    Probe: Are there any barriers to participation (e.g., transportation)? If so, how have these barriers been addressed?

10. About how often have students been participating in Collaborative activities?
    a) Typically, how many days per week do students participate in program activities?
    b) Typically, how many hours per day do students participate?
    c) How long do students participate in the program (for a semester, the entire school year, etc.)?

11. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behavior? (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

12. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from this program?

    Probe: Are there any unintended student outcomes that have resulted from the Collaborative program?

13. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., workforce readiness skills) affected participating students in terms of the following career readiness skills:
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communication skills?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

14. In what ways, if any, have participating students been exposed to new employment opportunities?

15. How has the Collaborative program helped the families of students involved in the Collaborative program?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

16. How did your district plan to spend the combined grant funds and matching funds?
    a) Have you, or are you planning to, make any changes to how you spend your funding? If so, what are the changes?

17. Do you envision continuing the Collaborative program once funding ends?
    a) If yes:
        i. How will you continue to run the program (where will funding come from)?
        ii. What changes would you make to the program?
    b) If no:
        i. What are the reasons for not continuing the program?

Wrap Up

18. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about your Collaborative program?

Thank you for your time today.

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Community Partner Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a community partner for [ENTER DISTRICT NAME]'s Collaborative program.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district.

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Community Partner Name:
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Information
First, I would like to find out some information about you and your organization.

1. What is your position within your business/organization? How long have you held that position?

2. How long, if at all, has your business/organization been a partner with the school district? In what ways, if any, did you partner with the district prior to the Collaborative grant program?
   Probe: When did you start serving students as part of the Collaborative program?

Section 2: Role of Your Organization in the Collaborative Program
Next, I would like to gather more information about your role in the implementation of the Collaborative program in this district.

3. What is your personal role and level of involvement in the Collaborative program?

4. In regard to your business/organization's role in the Collaborative program, please describe:
   a) The services you provide the district for the Collaborative program.
   b) How many students you work with and how often you work with them.
   c) The roles/responsibilities your staff has with the Collaborative program (involved in planning/implementation, or solely service provision?).
   d) The types of activities your staff is implementing.
   e) What types of student outcomes are expected from your program and the program's focus? For instance, did your program target specific outcomes (e.g., gang awareness, alcohol and drug addiction, etc..)?
   f) The types and amount of communication you have with the Collaborative. *Probe*: Is the relationship truly collaborative?

5. Based on your survey rating (Q2), how would you characterize your organization's relationship with the district for the Collaborative program?
   a) How does the district contribute to the Collaborative program?
   b) What are the main challenges you face in working with them?

6. What barriers or challenges, if any, has your organization faced during the implementation of the Collaborative program?
    a) If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

7. What factors, if any, do you believe are helping you to facilitate the implementation of the Collaborative program?

8. How would you characterize the students who participate in your Collaborative program (e.g., grade level(s), socioeconomic status, risk factors)?
    Probe: Are you successful in enrolling students with targeted characteristics, or is your student population different than you expected/intended?
    Probe: Are students enrolled on a rolling admissions basis or have the same students been participating all throughout?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on the participating students.

9. In what ways, *if any*, have your business/organization's activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behavior? (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?
    g) Improved family support/relationships with family?
    h) Other student outcomes?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

10. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from your business/organization?

    Probe: In question 4, you mentioned that your program focused on the following outcomes (insert outcomes). Have you seen students improve in these areas?

11. In what ways, if any, have your business/organization's activities (i.e., workforce readiness skills) affected participating students in terms of the following career readiness skills:
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communication skills?
    e) Other work skills?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

12. In what ways, if any, have participating students been exposed to new employment opportunities?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

13. Has anyone from the district discussed continuing the Collaborative program with your organization once grant funding ends?
    a) If yes:
        ii. What changes, if any, would you make to the services you offer?
        iii. How will the program continue (funding source)?
    b) If no:
        iv. What are the reasons for not continuing the program?

Wrap Up

14. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about the Collaborative program?

Thank you for your time today.

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
District Administrator* Interview Protocol

*District administrators may include superintendents and/or designees (e.g., assistant superintendents, consultants)

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a district administrator involved in the Collaborative program.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district.

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Program Information
First, I would like to discuss with you the demographics/characteristics of your students and the schools served, as well as gather information about the implementation of your Collaborative program.

1. Briefly, in a few sentences, how would you describe the overall purpose of your Collaborative program?

2. What are the characteristics of the schools served through the Collaborative program?
   Probe: How did you determine what schools to serve?

3. How is the program implemented at each school?
   Probe: Are there any variations in implementation at each school?

4. What barriers or challenges, if any, have you faced during the implementation of your Collaborative program?
   a) If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

5. What factors, if any, do you believe are helping you to facilitate the implementation of the Collaborative program?

6. How would you characterize the students who participate in your Collaborative program (e.g., grade level(s), socioeconomic status, risk factors)?
   Probe: Are you successful in enrolling students with targeted characteristics, or is your student population different than you expected/intended?
   Probe: Are students enrolled on a rolling admissions basis or have the same student been participating all throughout?

Section 2: Partnerships
Next, I would like to learn about your relationship with your community partners.

7. How were community partners chosen for this Collaborative program?

8. The following organization(s) was/were listed as your Collaborative program partner(s) in your grant application: [NOTE: INSERT NAMES OF PARTNERS]. Has this changed?
    a) Have you added any additional partners?
    b) Have you ended your partnership with any organizations? If so, why?

9. Based on your survey rating (Q2), how would you characterize your relationship with your partner organization(s)?
    a) How do these partner organizations contribute to the Collaborative program?
    b) What are the main challenges you face in working with them? If so, how have you overcome these challenges?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on the participating students.

10. About how many (and/or what percentage of) students in each grade level participate/attend Collaborative program activities?

    Probe: Are there any barriers to participation (e.g., transportation)? If so, how have these barriers been addressed?

11. About how often have students been participating in Collaborative activities?
    a) Typically, how many days per week do students participate in program activities?
    b) Typically, how many hours per day do students participate?
    c) How long do students participate in the program (for a semester, the entire school year, etc.)?

12. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behaviors (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?
    g) Improved family support/relationships with family?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

13. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from this program?

    Probe: Are there any unintended student outcomes that have resulted from the Collaborative program?

14. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (e.g., workforce readiness skills) affected participating students in terms of the following career readiness skills:
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communication skills?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

15. In what ways, if any, have participating students been exposed to new employment opportunities?

16. How has the Collaborative program helped the families of students involved in the Collaborative program?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

17. How did your district plan to spend the combined grant funds and matching funds?
    a) Have you, or are you planning to, make any changes to how you spend your funding? If so, what are the changes?

18. Do you envision continuing the Collaborative program once funding ends?
    a) If yes:
        v. How will you continue to run the program (where will funding come from)?
        vi. What changes would you make to the program?
    b) If no:
        vii. What are the reasons for not continuing the program?

Wrap Up

19. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about your Collaborative program?

Thank you for your time today.

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Principal/Vice Principal Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a principal/vice principal at a Collaborative school.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district, and at your school in particular.

This interview should take about 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Information

First, I would like to learn more about you, your school, and the implementation of the Collaborative program at your school.

1. How long have you been the principal/vice principal at (insert school name)?

2. How long has your school implemented the Collaborative?

3. How involved are you in the Collaborative?
   Probe: What activities do you participate in? Is your role to provide oversight or something more involved?

4. How do you identify the services/programs you offer to students at your school (all programs, not just the Collaborative)?
   a) How do you identify the needs of students at your school?
   b) In what ways does the Collaborative help meet the needs of students at your school?

5. What has your role been in bringing in/keeping the Collaborative at your school?

Section 2: Relationships

Next, I would like to learn about your relationship with your community partners.

6. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative program staff (from the district and community partners) and your students?
   Probe: Any particular strengths or limitations in the relationship?

7. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative staff (from the district and community partners) and the personnel at your school (i.e., vice principal, administrators, teachers)?
   Probe: Any particular strengths or limitations in the relationship? If so, what are they? How have you capitalized on these strengths and/or overcome these limitations?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on your school.

8. What value or benefit does the Collaborative bring to your school? In what ways, if any, does the Collaborative help you achieve your educational goals for the school/students?

9. Has the Collaborative brought any challenges to the school? If so, what are they?
   Probe: Are there any limitations of the program?
   a) How have you overcome these challenges/limitations?

10. What kind of feedback have you received about the Collaborative:
    a) From students?
    b) From parents?
    c) From teachers?
    d) From other principals?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

11. What does it/will it take to ensure you are able to continue to offer the Collaborative at your school?
    Probe: Is funding all that's needed or do you want hard evidence that the program is working?

Wrap Up

12. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about your Collaborative program?

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Teacher Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a teacher who works with Collaborative students.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Information
First, I would like to learn more about you, your school, and the implementation of the Collaborative program at your school.

1. How long have you been a teacher at (insert school name)?

2. What is your personal role and level of involvement in the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program?

Section 2: Relationships
Next, I would like to learn about relationships between staff, other personnel, and students.

3. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative staff and your students (strengths and limitations of relationships)?

4. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative staff and the personnel at your school (i.e. principal, administrators, teachers, etc.)?
   Probe: Does the Collaborative engage school staff or does it simply broker services directly to outside partners?
   Probe: What are the strengths and limitations of these relationships? How have you capitalized on these strengths and/or overcome these limitations?
   Probe: Are there any ways in which these relationships can be improved?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness
Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on your school.

5. What changes – positive or negative – have you noticed in your students that participate in the Collaborative?

6. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
   a) Academic achievement?
   b) Attendance improvement?
   c) Improved behavior? (e.g., fewer suspensions)
   d) Dropout rates?
   e) Course completion rates?
   f) College readiness?

Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

7. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from this program?

   Probe: Are there any unintended student outcomes that have resulted from the Collaborative program?

8. Have you seen improvements in your students' knowledge in the following areas? If so, how do you think the Collaborative is responsible for these changes?
   a) Technological knowledge?
   b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
   c) Effective leadership skills?
   d) Oral and written communications skills?

   Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

9. Are there any challenges or limitations that the Collaborative has caused for you/your students? If so, what are they? How have you addressed these challenges and limitations?

10. What kind of feedback have you received about the Collaborative:
    a) From students?
    b) From parents?
    c) From other teachers?
    d) From the principal/vice principal?

11. What kind of feedback have you received about the Collaborative from other teachers or other school personnel? What were their reactions?

12. What one thing would you change about the Collaborative? What suggestions/ recommendations do you have for Collaborative?

13. What one thing would you NOT change about the Collaborative?

Wrap Up

14. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about the Collaborative program?

Appendix D: Collaborative Surveys

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Grant Coordinator Survey

Instructions: Circle one response for each question.

1. How would you rate the success of implementing your Collaborative program?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

2. How would you rate the success of your district's relationship with your Collaborative partner(s)?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

3. How successful has the Collaborative program been in decreasing the dropout rate among participating students?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

4. How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' technological knowledge?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

5. How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' ethical workplace behaviors?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

6. How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' effective leadership skills?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

7. How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' oral and written communications skills?

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Community Partner Survey

Instructions: Circle one response for each question.

1. **How would you rate the success of the Collaborative program?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

2. **How would you rate the success of the relationship between your organization and the Collaborative program?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

3. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in decreasing the dropout rate among participating students?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

4. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' technological knowledge?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

5. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' ethical workplace behaviors?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

6. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' effective leadership skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

7. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' oral and written communications skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
District Administrator Survey

Instructions: Circle one response for each question.

1. **How would you rate the success of implementing your Collaborative program?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

2. **How would you rate the success of your district's relationship with your Collaborative partner(s)?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

3. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in decreasing the dropout rate among participating students?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

4. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' technological knowledge?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

5. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' ethical workplace behaviors?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

6. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' effective leadership skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

7. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' oral and written communications skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Principal/Vice Principal Survey

Instructions: Circle one response for each question.

1. **How would you rate the success of the Collaborative program?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

2. **How would you rate the success of your district's relationship with the Collaborative partner(s)?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

3. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in decreasing the dropout rate among participating students?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

4. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' technological knowledge?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

5. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' ethical workplace behaviors?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

6. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' effective leadership skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

7. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' oral and written communications skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Teacher Survey

Instructions: Circle one response for each question.

1. **How would you rate the success of the Collaborative program?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

2. **How would you rate the success of your district's relationship with the Collaborative partner(s)?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

3. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in decreasing the dropout rate among participating students?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

4. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' technological knowledge?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

5. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' ethical workplace behaviors?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

6. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' effective leadership skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

7. **How successful has the Collaborative program been in increasing participating students' oral and written communications skills?**

Unsuccessful		*Neutral*		*Very Successful*	*I Don't Know*
1	2	3	4	5	DK

Evaluation of the Collaborative Program

Student Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. We are surveying students to learn about their experiences in the program. You will be asked about the following topics:

- Background information about you.
- Information about your experiences in the Collaborative program (insert specific campus program name)
- General questions about your feelings toward your school and future career
- Information concerning your level of family support and community

The survey should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or to stop the survey at any time.

Part 1: Background Information

We would like to obtain some background information about you. Please answer the following questions.

1a. What is your first name? _____
(Reminder: We will not share your name with anyone. We will use this to match your information to data collected in the future.)

1b. What is your last name? _____
(Reminder: We will not share your name with anyone. We will use this to match your information to data collected in the future.)

2. What is your date of birth (e.g., 10/ 23/ 1995)? _____

(NOTE: Questions 1 and 2 will be formatted as a tear-away page from the paper survey.)

3. What is the name of your school? _____

4. What grade are you in?
   - o 9th grade
   - o 10th grade
   - o 11th grade
   - o 12th grade

5. Is English the main language used in your home?
   - o No
   - o Yes

6. What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) or guardian(s) completed? (please select one response per column)

	Father/ Step Father/	**Mother/ Step Mother/**	**Guardians**
Did not finish high school	○	○	○
High school diploma or GED	○	○	○
2-year college degree (Associate's)	○	○	○
4-year college degree (Bachelor's)	○	○	○
Master's degree	○	○	○
Ph.D. or other advanced professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)	○	○	○
I don't know	○	○	○

7. What are your plans after graduating from high school?

- o 4-year college or university
- o 2-year college (e.g., community college)
- o Work
- o Military
- o Apprenticeship
- o Time off
- o Undecided
- o Other (please list) _____

8. How many months have you been enrolled in the Collaborative program? _____months

Part 2: Your Thoughts on School and Behaviors

We would also like to learn more about some of your general thoughts about your experiences in school. Please answer the following questions.

9. Have you ever been in any of the following kinds of courses or programs while in high school? (please select one circle for each course or program)

	No	Yes
College or university course (at a college/university campus)	○	○
On-line course	○	○
Worked as an intern for a company or agency	○	○
Talent Search	○	○
Big Brothers/ Big Sisters	○	○
Boys and Girls Club	○	○
Upward Bound	○	○
Continuation High School	○	○
Alternative High School	○	○
Special School for pregnant girls or mothers	○	○
Taken the PSAT, SAT, or ACT	○	○

10. Fill in the responses that come closest to what level you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have the skills and abilities to complete my work	○	○	○	○	○
I have worked harder than I expected to work in school.	○	○	○	○	○
I think it is important to make good grades.	○	○	○	○	○
I care about my school.	○	○	○	○	○
I put forth a great deal of effort when doing my school work.	○	○	○	○	○
I have opportunities to be creative in my school assignments.	○	○	○	○	○
I think the things I learn at school are useful.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel safe in school.	○	○	○	○	○
I am challenged to do my best work at school.	○	○	○	○	○
Overall, people at school accept me for who I am.	○	○	○	○	○
In general, I am excited about my classes.	○	○	○	○	○
There is at least one adult in my school who cares about me and knows me well.	○	○	○	○	○
My school work makes me curious to learn about other things.	○	○	○	○	○

11. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Preparing for class (doing homework, reading, rehearsing, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Doing volunteer work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Internship/ Unpaid work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Working for pay (including babysitting, cutting grass, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching television	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participating in school-sponsored activities (athletics, clubs, government, newspapers, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Chatting or "surfing" online	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hanging out/ socializing with friends outside of school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Playing video games	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Exercising (not counting school-sponsored activities)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Talking on the phone	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Part3: Your thoughts on jobs and your future career

We would like to hear about your thoughts on jobs and your future career. Please answer the following questions.

12. Are you employed at this time?
- o No (**If you answered "no" in Question 12, skip to Part 4)**
- o Yes

13a. Did you do any work for pay last month, not counting work around the house?
- o No (**If you answered "no" in Question 13a, please skip to question 14**)
- o Yes (**If you answered "yes" in Question 13a, please answer 13b**)

13b. What is the average number of hours you worked every week in the last month? _____

14. In describing your present or most recent job, would you say it is…

	No	Yes
…a place where people goof off?	○	○
…something you do just for the money?	○	○
…more enjoyable than school?	○	○
…encourages good work habits?	○	○
…more important for you than school?	○	○

15. We would also like to learn about things that sometimes happen at some workplaces. We would like to know whether and how often you engage in the following behaviors in the past month. Please be open and honest in your responses.

	Never	1-3 times	4-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times
Stayed late to work on a task that really needed to be done	○	○	○	○	○
Made an obscene comment or gesture at a co-worker	○	○	○	○	○
Volunteered for extra work	○	○	○	○	○
Intentionally arrived late for work	○	○	○	○	○
Called in sick when I was not really sick	○	○	○	○	○
Scheduled meetings with my boss to assess my progress in my job	○	○	○	○	○
Took undeserved breaks to avoid work	○	○	○	○	○
Left work early without permission	○	○	○	○	○
Lied about the number of hours I worked	○	○	○	○	○
On my own initiative, I learned how to do something to help my company.	○	○	○	○	○
Worked on a personal matter on the job instead of working for my employer	○	○	○	○	○
Purposely ignored my supervisor's instruction	○	○	○	○	○
Bent the rules in dealing with someone (e.g., gave my friends employee discounts)	○	○	○	○	○
Worked overtime for my company, even when I was not schedule to work	○	○	○	○	○
Played games on the computer during work hours	○	○	○	○	○

Part 4: Your family

We would like to hear about your thoughts on your family. Please answer the following questions.

16. Which of the following people live in the same household with you? (please select all that apply)

- o I live alone
- o Father
- o Other male guardian (step-father or foster father)
- o Mother
- o Other female guardian (step-mother or foster mother)
- o Brother(s) and/ or sister(s) (including step- or half-)
- o Grandparent(s)
- o My husband/wife
- o My child or children
- o Other relative(s) (children or adults)
- o Non-relatives(s) (children or adults)

17. Are the following statements about your parents or guardians true or false?

	False	**True**	**Does Not Apply**
My parents or guardians keeps close track of how well I am doing in school.	○	○	○
My parents (or guardians) almost always know where I am.	○	○	○
My parents (or guardians) almost always know what I am doing.	○	○	○

18. How much have you talked to the following people about **your schooling**?

	Not At All	**Somewhat**	**A Great Deal**	**Does Not Apply**
Your mother	○	○	○	○
Your father	○	○	○	○
Your guardians	○	○	○	○
A guidance counselor	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○
Friends who are about your age	○	○	○	○

19. How much have you talked to the following people about **<u>your future career plans</u>**?

	Not At All	Somewhat	A Great Deal	Does Not Apply
Your mother	○	○	○	○
Your father	○	○	○	○
Your guardians	○	○	○	○
A guidance counselor	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○
Friends who are about your age	○	○	○	○

20. What do the following people think you *ought* to do after high school?

	Go to College	Get a Full-Time Job	Enter a Trade School or Appren-ticeship	Enter Military Service	They Don't Care	I Don't Know	Does Not Apply
Your mother	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Your father	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You guardians	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A guidance counselor	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Friends or relatives who are about your age	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Part 5: Your Community

We would like to hear about your thoughts on your neighborhood and community. Please answer the following questions.

21. Would you say you live in a close-knit community?
- o No
- o Yes
- o Don't Know

22. When your neighborhood is faced with a problem, do neighbors get together and deal with those problems?
- o No
- o Yes
- o Don't Know

23. Listed below are a few problems that neighborhoods sometimes have. Please indicate how much of a problem these are for your neighborhood.

	Never a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem	Don't Know
Housing and property not being kept up?	○	○	○	○	○
Vandalism (e.g., graffiti, broken street lights)?	○	○	○	○	○
Crime (muggings, robberies, etc.)?	○	○	○	○	○
People drinking alcohol in public?	○	○	○	○	○
People selling or using drugs?	○	○	○	○	○

Part 6: Your Thoughts on the Collaborative program

We would like to learn more about your experiences with the Collaborative program. Please answer the following questions.

24. On average, in the past year how often did you do the following in your classes?

	Not at All	Sometimes	Always
I participated in class discussions.	○	○	○
I asked questions in class.	○	○	○
I worked with other students on assignments during class.	○	○	○
I completed my homework.	○	○	○
I studied for tests/quizzes/exams.	○	○	○
I worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments.	○	○	○
I helped/ tutored other students who were in my class.	○	○	○
I skipped class.	○	○	○

25. How much has your experience in the Collaborative program contributed to your growth in the following areas?

	Very Little	Some	Quite a Bit	Very Much
Learning work-related skills	○	○	○	○
Writing effectively	○	○	○	○
Speaking effectively	○	○	○	○
Thinking critically	○	○	○	○
Using computers and/or other technology	○	○	○	○
Working well with others	○	○	○	○
Learning on your own	○	○	○	○
Solving real-world problems	○	○	○	○
Developing career goals	○	○	○	○
Making your community a better place	○	○	○	○
Preparing for college	○	○	○	○
Learning leadership skills	○	○	○	○
Developing personal values	○	○	○	○
Attending class regularly	○	○	○	○

26. After your experiences in the Collaborative program, do you know how to …

	No	Yes	I'm Not Sure
…apply for an office job in a big company?	○	○	○
…choose a school program which will help you in college?	○	○	○
…apply to a college for admission?	○	○	○
…apply for financial aid for college?	○	○	○
…find out about different kinds of jobs?	○	○	○

27. Please indicate whether you have been involved in the following since you joined the Collaborative program?

	Never	1-3 times	4-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times
I received a school suspension	○	○	○	○	○
I tried to hit or get into a physical fight with another person(s)	○	○	○	○	○
I intentionally damaged private property	○	○	○	○	○
I shoplifted minor articles (e.g., cigarettes, magazines, clothes)	○	○	○	○	○
I shoplifted major articles (i.e., over $100 in value)	○	○	○	○	○
I hid a firearm or knife on my person while outside my home	○	○	○	○	○
I cheated on a test or exam	○	○	○	○	○

28. Overall, would you say that the Collaborative program **helped you in school**? If so, what are some of the ways in which the Collaborative program helped you?

29. Overall, would you say that the Collaborative program **helped you in your career**? If so, what are some of the ways in which the Collaborative program helped you?

30. Are there things about the Collaborative program that you think did not work or could be improved? If so, what are those things?

31. Is there anything else about the Collaborative program that you wanted to mention?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix E: Propensity Score Matching Details

Propensity Score Matching

One of the centerpieces of the evaluation is a quasi-experimental study between Cycle 1 Collaborative schools and non-Collaborative schools. The development of a comparison group allows us to estimate what would have happened in the absence of the Collaborative program. Comparison schools were chosen using propensity score matching.

In our school-level matching procedure, 11 of the 15 Cycle 1 Collaborative schools were matched. Two schools from Port Arthur were excluded from the matching procedure because they did not implement the Collaborative program as expected (due in part to Hurricane Ike). Two Collaborative schools were not matched: Reach Charter (Houston ISD) and Rick Hawkins HS (School of Excellence in Education). Reach Charter was excluded from the matching because it had no 2007-08 campus achievement data and there was no match for Rick Hawkins on all these matching variables. Schools were matched on the following school-level variables:

- Percentage of students at the school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- Racial/ethnic composition of the student body
- Percentage of special education students in the school
- Percentage of English language learners (ELL) students in the school
- Percentage of at risk students.
- Instructional program (Regular, Alternative, DAEP)
- Charter status (charter, not a charter school)
- Urbanicity (rural, suburban, urban) – this variable was created by grouping the various 'community type' categories as those are classified by TEA into the following three overarching categories: (a) Suburban [Major Metropolitan Suburban; Other Central City Suburban]; (b) Urban [Major Urban]; and (c) Rural [Independent Town, Other Central City, Non-Metropolitan, and Rural]
- School enrollment – this variable was transformed from a continuous variable to a categorical variable with five categories; based on school size, schools were categorized as: (1) very small schools [fewer than 300 students], (2) small schools [300-599 students], (3) medium sized schools [600-899 students], 4) large schools [900-1,999 students], and 5) very large schools [2,000 or more students].

Finally, the matching procedure required that schools have complete 2007-08 campus achievement data in Reading and Math as well as being located in a Collaborative grantee district.

The matching of Cycle 1 Collaborative and comparison schools were conducted using a precise algorithm applied through a computer-based macro, called 'matchit', written by Ho, Imai, King, and Stuart (2004, 2007), following the work of Rosenbaum and Rubin (1983). The default nearest neighbor matching method in MatchIt is "greedy" matching, where the closest control match for each treated unit is chosen one at a time. Specifically, a 1-to-1 nearest neighbor match on a logistic-regression based propensity score within caliper restrictions was followed. The procedure chooses one control case (in this situation, a non-participating Collaborative school) that is closest to the treated case on a 'distance' measure without replacement (by default, it is the logit). The number of standard deviations of the distance measure within which to draw control cases was set to 0.25.

Table E1 below summarize the characteristics of the resulted matched schools. Eleven of the 13 schools were matched with comparable schools on all proposed matching variables. Variables that are italicized were subject to exact matching. The balance results indicate that in the resulting matches, there were no systematic or significant (mean) differences between the matched

pairs of schools on the majority of the key matching variables, with the exception of the free-reduced price lunch variable.

Table E1: Summary of Balance Statistics for Matched Schools

Matching Variables	Cycle 1 Collaborative Schools Average (Std. Deviation)	Non-Collaborative Schools Average (Std. Deviation)	Std. Mean Difference
Economically Disadvantaged	90% (8.9)	84% (7.3)	0.656
At risk	72.2% (10.9)	72.7% (10)	0.052
African American	13.5% (26)	14.2 (26)	0.030
Hispanic	84% (25.4)	83 (26)	0.021
Enrolled in Special Education	15% (3.5)	14.3 (3.7%)	0.251
Limited English Proficiency	17.4% (9.9)	16.8 % (11.7)	0.057
Rural	***45.5%***	***45.5%***	***0.000***
Suburban	***27.2%***	***27.2%***	***0.000***
Urban	***27.3%***	***27.3%***	***0.000***
Regular	***100%***	***100%***	***0.000***
Non-Charter	***100%***	***100%***	***0.000***
Very Small	***-***	***-***	***0.000***
Small	***-***	***-***	***0.000***
Medium	***9.1%***	***9.1%***	***0.000***
Large	***36.4%***	***36.4%***	***0.000***
Very Large	***54.5%***	***54.5%***	***0.000***

Results of the first year quasi-experimental study are not presented in this draft report, because aggregate school-level TAKS data are not available. We do, however, expect to report first-year results in our final draft by the end of August.

Appendix F: Types of Collaborative Programs and Services Provided

Table F1. Specific Strategies Used by Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantees, by Provider (D=Direct, B=Brokered to Outside Agency)

	School of Excellence in Education	Port Arthur ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Houston ISD	Edgewood ISD	Brownsville ISD
ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES						
Tutoring	D	D, B	D	D		D
Dual credit courses	B		B		B	B
Reading/literacy program	D					
Funding for textbooks	D	D				D
Individual graduation/ education plans	D		D		D	D
Incentives to students			B	D		
Peer-to-peer tutoring		D	D	D		
Professional development for teachers	B	D	B		D	D
Academic advisors	D					
Mentoring (by Teachers)	D	D				
Educational referrals	B				B	
Academic acceleration (credit acceleration)			D			
Credit recovery	D	D	D			B
WORKFORCE SKILL DEVELOPMENT						
Paid employment	B		D	D	D	B
Job shadowing	B		B		D	B
Job internship	B		D		B	
Job placement	B		B			B
Job preparation workshops		B	B		D	
Career paths		B	D		B	B
Vocational education		B	D	D		B
Vocational assessments/ career counseling		B	B			D, B
CO-OP classes						D
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES						
Mentoring (by peers)		D		D		
Mentoring (by adult non-school staff)				B		B
Dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals	D			D	B	
At risk Counselors			D			D
Transportation	D	D	B		D	
Child care			B		D	
Attempts to improve school climate			D	D		
PARENT/FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES						
Parenting education	B	D	B	D	D	B
Home visits	D	B				B

Table F1. Specific Strategies Used by Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantees, by Provider (D=Direct, B=Brokered to Outside Agency)

	School of Excellence in Education	Port Arthur ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Houston ISD	Edgewood ISD	Brownsville ISD
Family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports)	B		B	D	D	D
LIFE SKILLS/BEHAVIOR						
Financial literacy	B					
Character education		B	B	D	D	
Community service			B			
Motivational speakers			D	B		B
Juvenile Justice coordination		B				B
Pregnancy services (prenatal care; offsite instruction)						B
Means for improving attendance/truancy (e.g., attendance contracts)		B	D			D
PR Campaign to increase community awareness			D			
Behavior management (e.g., anger; discipline matters)		B			B	
COLLEGE PREPARATION/ APPLICATION ASSISTANCE						
Financial aid			B			D
College Fairs, centers for college prep	D				D	B
Post secondary education assistance		B	D		B	D

* Service categories differ slightly from the core service categories established under the Collaborative grant program. The additional service categories were identified to allow the evaluation team a more granular look at service data.

Appendix G: Descriptive Information About Cycle 1 Evaluation Participants

Cycle 1 Grantees (Including Port Arthur)

Table G1: Collaborative Student Survey Respondents, by Location

Grantee Program	n	%
Project STEPS (San Antonio)	36	14.5%
Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (Houston)	10	4.0%
College, Career, and Technology Academy (Los Fresnos)	35	14.1%
Edgewood ISD Middle College Program (San Antonio)	15	6.0%
Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program (Brownsville)	153	61.5%
Total	249	100%

Source: Collaborative Student Survey

Table G2: Collaborative Student Survey Respondents, by Grade

Grade Level	n	%
Grade 9	45	18.2%
Grade 10	46	18.5%
Grade 11	79	31.9%
Grade 12	78	31.5%
Total	**248**	**100.0%**

Source: Collaborative Student Survey; 1 student did not report grade level

Table G3: Length of Time Students Have Been Enrolled in the Collaborative Program

Length of Participation	n	%
0-3 Months	66	34.4%
4-6 Months	45	23.4%
7-9 Months	68	35.4%
10 Months or More	13	6.8%
Total	**192**	**100%**

Source: Collaborative Student Survey

Table G4: Number of Schools per District: Cycle 1 Grantees

District Name	n	%
Brownsville ISD	5	33.3%
Edgewood ISD	2	13.3%
Houston ISD	4	26.7%
Los Fresnos CISD	1	6.7%
Port Arthur ISD	2	13.3%
School of Excellence in Education	1	6.7%

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08

Table G5: School Baseline Characteristics by Grade Level

School Baseline Characteristics by grade level	LEP	Economically Disadvantaged	At risk	Special ed.	Career-Technology Ed.	Met TAKS Reading	Met TAKS Math	Met TAKS Science
9th	19%	88%	74%	17%	67%	73%	49%	NA
10th	14%	89%	70%	20%	67%	80%	52%	46%
11th	11%	86%	70%	14%	79%	82%	69%	71%
12th	11%	85%	70%	14%	75%	NA	NA	NA

Source: AEIS, 2007-08

Table G6: Collaborative Participating Schools by Community Type

Community Type	Frequency (Percent)
Charters	1 (6.7%)
Rural	5 (33.3%)
Urban	4 (26.7%)
Suburban	5 (33.3%)

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08

Table G7: Average Baseline Characteristics for Collaborative Schools

Baseline Characteristics	High Schools (n=15)
Limited English Proficiency	14.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	86.4%
At risk	70.7%
White	2.5%
African American	21.7%
Hispanic	74.2%
Enrolled in Special Education	14.9%
Enrolled in Career & Technology Education	71.3%
Mobility	29.3%
Dropout Rate	9.2%
Completion Rate	61.8%
Met TAKS Standard in Reading (2007-08)	79.3%
Met TAKS Standard in Math (2007-08)	56.5%
Met TAKS Standard in Science (2007-08)	53.2%

Table G8: Collaborative Grantee Districts by Urbanicity

Community Type	n	Percent
Charters	1	16.7%
Rural	1	16.7%
Urban	1	16.7%
Suburban	3	50.0%

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08

Table G9: 2007-08 Baseline Characteristics of Collaborative Grantee Districts

District Baseline Characteristics	Average	Min	Max
Economically Disadvantaged	86%	79%	95%
White	4%	0%	8%
African American	20%	0%	50%
Hispanic	73%	40%	98%
Enrolled in Limited English Proficiency	24%	4%	42%
Enrolled in Career & Technology Education	10%	2%	17%
Dropout Rate (7^{th} - 8^{th} grades)	0.58	0.01	1.3
Graduation Rate	69%	63%	80.5%

Source: AEIS, 2007-08

Cycle 1 Grantee District-Level Data (Not Including Port Arthur)

Table G10: Urbanicity of Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantee Districts

Community Type	Frequency	Percent
Rural	1	20%
Urban	1	20%
Suburban	2	40%
Charter Schools (draws students from larger area)	1	20%
Total	**5**	**100%**

Source: PEIMS data, 2007-08 school year

Table G11: Baseline Characteristics of Cycle 1 Collaborative Grantee Districts (2007-08)

District Baseline Characteristics	Average	Min	Max
Economically Disadvantaged	86%	79%	95%
White	4%	1%	8%
African American	15%	0%	43%
Hispanic	80%	49%	98%
Limited English Proficiency	25%	4%	42%
Enrolled in Career & Technology Education	10%	2%	17%
Graduation Rate	69%	63%	81%

Source: PEIMS data, 2007-08 school year

Appendix H: Nonresponse Analysis

Table H1: Nonresponse Analysis
Cycle 1 Collaborative Students Included in TAKS Analyses vs. Those Who Are Not

Characteristic	Students Included in TAKS Analyses n	Students Included in TAKS Analyses %	Students Not Included in TAKS Analyses n	Students Not Included in TAKS Analyses %
At Risk	515	82.5%	411	86.1%
Limited English Proficient	480	14.8%	347	18.2%
Special Education*	515	8.2%	411	24.8%
Economically Disadvantaged	515	88.0%	411	88.1%
Grade Level*				
Grade 9	142	27.6%	72	17.8%
Grade 10	163	31.7%	79	19.5%
Grade 11	144	28.0%	89	22.0%
Grade 12	65	12.7%	165	40.7%
Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	75	14.6%	67	16.3%
Hispanic	424	82.3%	334	81.3%
White	16	3.1%	10	2.4%

Source: PEIMS, 2008-09 data
* $p<.05$

Table H2: Nonresponse Analysis
Students Included in Cycle 1 Collaborative Student Survey vs. Those Who Are Not[a]

Characteristic	Students Included in Collaborative Student Survey n	Students Included in Collaborative Student Survey %	Nonrespondents n	Nonrespondents %
At Risk	203	85.7%	681	85.3%
Limited English Proficient	191	16.2%	594	16.8%
Special Education	203	14.3%	681	16.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	203	88.7%	681	89.3%
Grade Level*				
Grade 9	37	18.2%	177	26.3%
Grade 10	61	30.1%	169	25.1%
Grade 11	66	32.5%	149	22.1%
Grade 12	39	19.2%	179	26.6%
Race/Ethnicity*				
African-American	15	7.4%	92	13.5%
Hispanic	177	87.2%	574	84.3%
White	11	5.4%	15	2.2%

Source: PEIMS, 2008-09 data and Collaborative Student Survey, 2009.
[a] These number exclude Port Arthur, which wasn't administered the survey. Some Collaborative Student Survey Respondents could not be aligned with PEIMS data and are included in this analysis as nonrespondents. Altogether, we were able to align 213 survey respondents out of 249 total (85.5%) to conduct this analysis.
* $p<.05$

Appendix I: Factor Analyses of the Student Survey Data

The Cycle 1 Collaborative student survey asked respondents about a wide array of topics, including the following: self-efficacy, the types of neighborhoods in which they live, engagement in school, the ways in which the Collaborative program helped students, general behaviors, and workplace ethics. Factor analysis was used to better understand the interrelationships between these variables and also how they affected additional quantitative analyses.

Student Self-Efficacy

In total, the survey asked Collaborative students (*N*=238) 13 items concerning their level of self-efficacy in school. Responses were on a Likert scale, with the following labels: 1 = "Strongly Disagree", 2 = "Disagree", 3 = "Neutral", 4 = "Agree", and 5 = "Strongly Agree."
Initially, the factorability of the 13 items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .94, well above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(78)=1481.49$; p <.001). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation because the items were expected to measure the concept of self-efficacy.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent, well defined by the variables, and explained 50% of the variance. All but two items had factor loadings above .6 (see Table I1). The item asking whether students believed that people at school accept them for who they are loaded at .59 (Q10) and the item measuring whether students believed that there was at least one adult in their school who cared about them and knew them well loaded at .58 (Q12). The Cronbach Alpha (.914) did not change substantially with the deletion of either of these items, therefore both items were retained.

Table I1: Student Self-Efficacy Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) I have the skills and abilities to complete my work.	.69
(2) I have worked harder than I expected to work in school.	.63
(3) I think it is important to make good grades	.73
(4) I care about my school.	.78
(5) I put forth a great deal of effort when doing my school work.	.75
(6) I have opportunities to be creative in my school assignments.	.63
(7) I think the things I learn at school are useful.	.76
(8) I feel safe in school.	.67
(9) I am challenged to do my best work at school.	.78
(10) Overall, people at school accept me for who I am.	.59
(11) In general, I am excited about my classes.	.77
(12) There is at least one adult in my school who cares about me and knows me well.	.58
(13) My school work makes me curious to learn about other things.	.79

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

Student Neighborhoods

The survey asked Collaborative students five items evaluating how much of a problem these five items are of for their neighborhoods (e.g., vandalism, crime). Responses ranged from 1 = "Never a Problem", 2 = "Sometimes a Problem", 3 = "Often a Problem", and 4 = "Always a Problem." Students could also select 5 for "Don't Know" responses, however these responses were excluded from these analyses. The final size of the dataset was 151 students.
Initially, the factorability of the five items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .80, well above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10)=368.41$; p <.001). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation because the items were expected to measure student perceptions of their neighborhoods.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent and well defined by the variables and explained 63% of the variance. Only one item had factor loadings below .6 (see Table I2). This item (Q1) asked whether students believed that housing and property values not being kept up is a problem in their neighborhood (.51). The final Cronbach Alpha was .852 and was improved only slightly by deleting question 1, therefore this variable was retained.

Table I2: Student Neighborhoods Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) Housing and property values not being kept up	.51
(2) Vandalism (e.g., graffiti, broken street lights)	.85
(3) Crime (e.g., muggings, robberies)	.79
(4) People drinking alcohol in public	.88
(5) People selling or using drugs	.87

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

Student Engagement

In total, the survey asked Collaborative students eight items regarding their level of engagement in their classes by asking them to rate how often in the past year they did the following in their classes. Responses ranged from 1 = "Never", and 2 = "Sometimes", to 3 = "Always." The final size of the sample for these analyses was 239 students. Question 8 was reverse coded, so that the item reflects positive student engagement that was consistent with the other items in student engagement.

Initially, the factorability of the eight items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .77, well above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(28)=479.07$; p <.001). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation because the items were expected to measure concept of student engagement in the classrooms.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent and well defined by the variables and explained 40% of the variance. Only one item had factor loadings below .6 (see Table I3). This item (Q8) asked whether students skipped classes (reverse) and the factor loading was .40.[35] The final Cronbach Alpha for the eight items was .777, a score which was only slightly increased by the removal of question 8. Therefore, a decision was made to retain question 8 in the student engagement factor.

[35] By deleting the last item, question 8, the Cronbach Alpha improved only marginally from .777 to .785, therefore a decision was made to retain the eighth student engagement item in the final factor.

Table I3: Student Engagement Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) I participated in class discussions.	.61
(2) I asked questions in class.	.71
(3) I worked with other students on assignments during class.	.69
(4) I completed my homework.	.67
(5) I studied for tests/ quizzes/ exams.	.67
(6) I worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments.	.65
(7) I helped/ tutored other students who were in my class.	.60
(8) I skipped class (REVERSE)	.40

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

Collaborative Program's Positive Effects on Students

In total, the survey asked Collaborative students 14 items concerning the positive effects of the Collaborative program on students. Student were asked how much has the Collaborative program has contributed to students on the following items. Responses for these items included: 1 = "very little", 2 = "some", 3 = "quite a bit", and 4 = "very much." The final size of the sample for these analyses was 223 students.

Initially, the factorability of the 14 items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .94, well above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(91)=2062.25$; p <.001). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation because the items were expected to measure the positive ways in which Collaborative students believe the program has helped them to improve.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent and well defined by the variables and explained 58% of the variance. Only one item (Q14) asking students whether they attended classes regularly had a factor loadings below .6 (see Table I4). The final Cronbach Alpha for the eight items was .943. Removing question 14 actually caused the final Cronbach Alpha to fall slightly, therefore a decision was made to retain question 14 in the final factor.

Table I4: Collaborative Program's Positive Effects on Students Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) Learning work-related skills	.75
(2) Writing effectively	.74
(3) Speaking effectively	.75
(4) Thinking critically	.81
(5) Using computers and/or other technology	.70
(6) Working well with others	.77
(7) Learning on your own	.75
(8) Solving real-world problems	.77
(9) Developing career goals	.82
(10) Making your community a better place	.75
(11) Preparing for college	.75
(12) Learning leadership skills	.79
(13) Developing personal values	.81
(14) Attending class regularly	.68

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

Behaviors of Students

Collaborative students were asked seven items on the types of behaviors students have been involved in since they have been participating in the Collaborative students. Responses for these question items ranged from 1 = "Never", 2 = "1 to 3 times", 3 = "4 to 10 times", 4 = "11 to 20 times", 5 = "20 plus times." The final size of the sample of these analyses was 235 students.
Initially, the factorability of the 13 items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .74, well above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(21)=592.51$; p <.001). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with varimax rotation because the items were expected to measure the concept student behaviors.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent and well defined by the variables and explained 34% of the variance.[36] All but two items had factor loadings above .6 (see Table I5). The item (Q5) asking whether students shoplifted major articles (.42) and the item (Q6) asking whether students had hid a firearm or knife on their person while outside the house (.37). The final Cronbach Alpha (.773) did not change substantially with the deletion of either of these items, therefore a decision was made to retain both items.

Table I5: Student Behaviors Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) I received a school suspension.	.79
(2) I tried to hit or get into a physical fight with another person(s).	.76
(3) I intentionally damaged private property.	.61
(4) I shoplifted minor articles (e.g., cigarettes, magazines, clothes)	.58
(5) I shoplifted major articles (e.g., over $100 in value)	.42
(6) I hid a firearm or knife on my person while outside my home.	.37
(7) I cheated on a test or exam.	.83

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

Workplace Ethics

Students who were employed or responded to the employment questions (N=77) were asked 15 additional items to gauge their workplace ethics. Specifically, students were asked the number of times they have engaged in the following workplace behaviors in the past month. Responses varied to include the following categories: 1 = "Never", 2 = "1-3 times", 3 = "4-10 times", 4 = "11-20 times" and 5 = 20 plus times. These items ranged from positive workplace behaviors (i.e., I volunteered for extra work) to negative workplace behaviors (i.e., I called in sick when I was not really sick). From these items, two workplace beliefs measures were created, although it was necessary to discard some of the more poorly factor loaded items, especially given the lower sample size for these questions.

Positive Workplace Behaviors:

In total, five items loaded on the same factor and met several well-established criteria for 72 students. The factorability of the five items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .67, above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10)=100.49$; p <.001). Therefore, confirmatory

[36] Initially, two factors emerged – the first with an eigenvalue of 1.136 and the second with an eigenvalue of less than one (.414). Only item 7 was above .60 factor loading on the second factor. Since the standard eigenvalue is one, this factor analyses was reexamined with the cutoff point of one for an eigenvalue.

factor analysis was performed with varimax because the items tapped into the concept of positive workplace beliefs.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent and well defined by the variables and explained 51% of the variance. Only one items had factor loadings that was below .6 (see Table I6). This item asked students whether they had scheduled meetings with their boss to assess their progress on the job and loaded at .59 (Q3). The Cronbach Alpha (.749) did not change substantially with the deletion of this item and it was decided to retain this item in the final factor measuring positive workforce beliefs.

Table I6: Positive Workplace Ethics Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) Stayed late to work on a task that really needed to be done.	.73
(3) Volunteered for extra work.	.78
(6) Scheduled meetings with my boss to assess my progress in my job.	.59
(10) On my own initiative, I learned how to do something to help my company.	.70
(14) Worked overtime for my company, even when I was not scheduled to work.	.72

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

Negative Workplace Behaviors:

In total, five items loaded on the same factor and met several well-established criteria for 72 students. The factorability of the five items was examined using several well-established criteria. First, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .83, well above the recommended .6 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(10)=208.95$; $p<.001$). Therefore, confirmatory factor analysis was performed with varimax because the items tapped into the concept of positive workplace beliefs.

A single factor was extracted that was internally consistent and well defined by the variables and explained 74% of the variance.[37] None of these items had factor loadings that was below .6 (see Table I7). The final Cronbach Alpha for the negative workplace beliefs was .873.

Table I7: Negative Workplace Ethics Factor Loadings

Survey Questions	Factor Loadings
(1) Intentionally arrived late for work.	.71
(2) Called in sick when I was not really sick.	.87
(3) Left work early without permission.	.69
(4) Bent the rules in dealing with someone (e.g., gave my friends employee discount)	.89
(5) Played games on the computer during work hours.	.94

Source: Collaborative Student Surveys

[37] In exploratory factor analyses, three factors emerged. The first factor represents the Negative Workplace Beliefs factor discussed in the section above, while the later two factors were composed of other items from the survey, including: (1) Made an obscene gesture at a coworker, (2) Left work early without permission, and (3) Lied about the number of hours I worked. Two items did not load at all – (1) Called in sick when I was not really sick and (2) Took undeserved breaks to avoid work.

Appendix J: Hierarchical Linear Models of Collaborative Students

Appendix J: Hierarchical Linear Models of Collaborative Students

Introduction:

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how student-level and school-level predictors are related to academic achievement of Collaborative participants. The outcomes of interest are student achievement levels in TAKS math and TAKS reading (as measured by scale scores), as well as rates at which Collaborative students met standards in these two subject areas. In addition to a standard set of predictors, (e.g., student demographics, special education status, LEP), the evaluation team included variables of immediate policy interest. For example, the team investigated the effect of time students spent in the collaborative program. Students who are exposed to the program for more hours would seem to be more likely to have stronger gains in academic achievement. The team also investigated how schools and grantees differed in these findings, and the role that services or service delivery models may have had in the results.

Hierarchical Linear Models (HLM)

For the evaluation of the Collaborative, Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) is the appropriate technique for analyzing our data due to nesting – students are nested within schools. This nesting structure leads to the correlation among observations and thus conventional regression techniques would underestimate standard errors (Hox, 2002).[38] SAS PROC GLIMMIX was chosen to implement HLM and analyze the data for this report.

The subject areas examined were mathematics and reading (to be more precise, 9th grade reading, and ELA at the 10th grade and exit level). For each subject area, the evaluation team examined two types of dependent variables. One was the TAKS scale score and the other was whether a given student met the state standard in TAKS math/reading. For the modeling of the scale scores, the evaluation team used HLM since the outcomes are continuous variables. At level 1 of the HLM analysis, TAKS scale score is predicted as a function of a linear combination of level-1 (student-level) and level-2 (school-level) variables, the description of which are presented later. In this HLM model, only the intercepts or the school effects (*u*'s below) are treated as random effects. [39]

Level 1: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * X_{ij} ... + r_{ij}$

Level 2: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} * X_{j} ... + u_{0j}$

Level 2: $\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$

where

- Level 1 is student and Level 2 is school.
- Postscripts i and j index, respectively, student and school.
- Y represents a TAKS scale score from 2008-09.

[38] HLM can partial out the variance and covariance into within and between variance components, which HLM does by having error terms at both the individual and school levels. In this way, problems of dependence will be solved because the student error term will take away the correlated school-level errors of similar students by shunting that "likeness" into the level 2 error term.

[39] This means that the school averages of the outcome, adjusted for covariates in the model, were weighted by the reliability of the school averages. This precision weighting technique is based on the idea that (a) the schools that contributed a larger number of subjects and produced a smaller outcome variance are statistically more reliable and (b) they should influence the estimation of the grand average of the school averages at a greater magnitude (than other schools with imprecise measurement). As a result, the HLM intercept (β_{0j}), which is the grand average of reliability-weighted school averages, is a conservative estimate (devoid of the influence of imprecisely measured outliers).

- β's are Level 1 parameters and γ's are Level 2 parameters.
- *X's* with postscripts i and j are Level 1 independent variables and X's with a postscript j are Level 2 independent variables.
- *r*'s and *u*'s are independently and identically distributed residuals, respectively, of Level 1 and Level 2.
- All predictors, including dichotomous variables (coded 0 and 1), are centered around the grand mean, so the intercept value corresponds to the outcome value of a subject who has average values on all predictors.

The exploratory HLM analysis, however, indicated that the between-school variance was relatively small and the reliability of the school averages were generally low, which made our models difficult to converge. If the between-school variance is too small to estimate and the model does not converge, the evaluation team chose to present the result of the simple OLS regression model. In the case of HGLM to be discussed later, the simple model will be a logistic regression model. Because some clustering effect may be still present, standard errors may be underestimated in the simple models. If the model converges and the between-school variance is trivial in size, we will still present the HLM results, so standard errors are not underestimated and the statistical tests remain as conservative as possible.

Some additional analyses were conducted. In modeling the school-level effects as random effects, the issue of interest was how the thirteen schools differ in the outcomes and how grantee membership is associated with each school's performance. The exploratory analysis indicated that our data does not support the complex school-level analysis using grantee information as level-2 predictors in the HLM model. This was due to the relatively small sample size of schools (*n*=13) and grantees (*n*=5) and, as mentioned, the low variance between schools. Instead, we investigated the school-specific outcome results and examined whether schools served by some grantees performed better than others.

Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM):

For the modeling of whether students met the state standard, we used a form of Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM) called a multilevel logistic regression model. Using the logit function and the binary distribution as the assumed error form, it models the likelihood of a student meeting the standard (as opposed to not meeting the standard). For the control of prior year achievement status, we used the student status indicating whether a student met the standard or not. The rest of the independent variables remained the same as in the HLM models.

Level 1: $\log(P_{ij}/1-P_{ij}) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * X_{ij} \ldots$

Level 2: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} * X_j \ldots + u_{0j}$

Level 2: $\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$

- *P* represents a subject's probability of meeting the standard in a test.
- *u*'s are school-specific residuals that are independently and identically distributed.

The model estimates school effects (or put differently, the differences between schools in the likelihood of a student meeting standard in TAKS math and reading) as random effects (γ's). As mentioned earlier, the exploratory analysis found that the between-school variance was small in size. When the HGLM model did not converge, we removed the random effects from the model and simplified it to be a multivariate logistic regression model. This model can be considered as a special case of HGLM where the between-school variance is set to zero.

Sample and Variables

The initial database (i.e., student upload datasets for reading and mathematics achievement) included 966 subjects. When several data filters were applied, the sample size was reduced to 356 for the TAKS math analysis and 348 for the TAKS reading analysis. Most of the data attrition occurred due to the unavailability of the pre- and/or post- achievement information. This causes a concern for externality validity of results.

Outcome variables included two results from the TAKS exam: (1) scale score of the TAKS math and reading exams and (2) a dichotomous variable measuring whether a student met the TAKS math and TAKS reading standard (based on predetermined threshold values in the TAKS scores).

At the student level, dummy variables were created to capture the following measures: student grade level (Grade 9, 10, 11, 12), economic disadvantage (no disadvantage vs. disadvantage indicated by free lunch, reduced lunch, and other forms of economic disadvantage), at risk status (defined by TEA), male, race (African American, Hispanic and White), LEP, and special education. There were two continuous variables measuring the number of hours students participated in the Collaborative and the prior year test score. The prior year TAKS scores, used for the HLM analysis, were not comparable by different grade levels (i.e., they are not vertically equated), so they were transformed to z-scores with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1 within each subject and grade level. For the HGLM analysis, we used a dummy variable to describe whether a student met the state standard or not in the prior year. The Level 2 variables were Title 1 status (dichotomous variable), urbanicity (dichotomous variable; urban versus suburban schools), charter school (dichotomous variable), and student teacher ratio (continuous variable). The sample included 13 schools whose collaborative programs were managed by 5 grantees (Brownsville, Edgewood, Houston, Los Fresnos, and School of Excellence in Education).

Findings from Descriptive Analyses:

Table J1 presents the results of descriptive analyses of the school- and student-level variables used in the analyses. Only 12% of the sample was comprised of 12th grade students because high school seniors took TAKS exit-level tests only when they did not pass the tests in earlier grades. Over three-quarters of students in the samples were economically disadvantaged and were considered at risk. About 80% of the sample consisted of Hispanic students. On average, the subjects received slightly less than 6 hours of participation time in the Collaborative program. A majority of the schools were the Title 1 schools and located in the urban areas.

Table J1: Descriptive Statistics for the Between Collaborative Student Analyses

	TAKS Math (*n*=356)		TAKS Reading (*n*=348)	
Student-Level Variables	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Pretest Scale Score (2007-08)	2082.04	175.30	2198.70	166.07
Posttest Scale Score (2008-09)	2109.71	184.66	2181.11	137.67
Met Standard Pretest (2007-08)	42%		74%	
Met Standard Posttest (2008-09)	51%		76%	
Grade 9	29%		32%	
Grade 10	22%		26%	
Grade 11	37%		36%	
Grade 12	12%		6%	
Economic Disadvantage	86%		88%	
At Risk Status	79%		80%	
Male	49%		50%	
African American	17%		17%	
Hispanic	79%		80%	
White	4%		3%	
LEP Status	15%		17%	
Special Education	4%		6%	
Total Number of Collaborative Hours	5.86	5.78	5.57	5.61
School-Level Variables (13 schools)				
Title 1	69%		0.69	
Urban	69%		0.69	
Charter	15%		0.15	
Student Teacher Ratio	15.29	1.07	15.29	1.07

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08; PEIMS, 2008-09; Common Core of Data, 2008-09

Findings from the HLM and HGLM analyses

HGLM Analysis of Students' Meeting State Standards

Table J2 reports the results of Model 1 and 2 that examined the characteristics that best predict students meeting state standards in TAKS math and TAKS reading. In both subjects, the lack of variance between schools made the HGLM computation difficult. The TAKS math model did not converge and thus the result of the simplified model without the random effects is presented. The TAKS reading model converged and the between-school variance, though statistically not significant, was reported.

Only a few of the predictors produced statistical significant results ($p<.05$). For both subjects, special education status of students was negatively related to the likelihood of meeting the standard and this effect was statistically significant. The prior-year results in the same outcomes were also strong and positive predictors. Some predictors had inconsistent findings across the two subject areas. For example, TAKS math results for White students was positive and statistically significant, while TAKS reading results for White students were close to zero. Likewise, students in charter schools were significantly more likely to pass TAKS math, but were less likely to pass TAKS reading, controlling for other variables. The number of service hours received by Collaborative students did not predict success (or failure) in a student's ability to meet both TAKS math and TAKS reading standards.

Table J2: Models 1 and 2: HLM Results Predicting Students Who Met Standards in Math and Reading (Cycle 1)

	Model 1: TAKS Math Outcomes (Met Standard)				Model 2: TAKS Reading Outcomes (Met Standard)			
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Stat Sig.	Math Odds Ratio	Coefficient	Std. Error	Stat Sig.	Reading Odds Ratio
Student-Level Data								
Intercept	-0.08	(0.16)			1.41	(0.28)	***	
Grade 10	0.12	(0.42)		1.13	0.14	(0.45)		1.15
Grade 11	1.25	(0.39)	**	3.48	0.65	(0.42)		1.92
Grade 12	1.26	(0.55)	*	3.51	1.14	(0.68)	t	3.13
Economic Disadvantage	0.90	(0.49)	t	2.46	0.37	(0.59)		1.45
At Risk Status	-0.44	(0.45)		0.64	-1.06	(0.67)		0.35
Male	-0.10	(0.28)		0.90	-0.06	(0.32)		0.94
African American	0.03	(0.45)		1.03	0.21	(0.57)		1.23
White	3.22	(1.41)	*	24.98	0.01	(1.18)		1.01
LEP Status	-0.07	(0.43)		0.93	-0.48	(0.46)		0.62
Special Education	-1.78	(0.79)	*	0.17	-1.46	(0.55)	**	0.23
Total Number of Collaborative Hours	0.01	(0.04)		1.01	-0.01	(0.05)		0.99
Pretest Met the Standard (2007-08)	2.69	(0.35)	***	14.72	2.04	(0.40)	***	7.73
School-Level Data								
Title 1	-0.22	(0.79)		0.80	-0.19	(1.32)		0.83
Urban	0.00	(0.66)		1.00	-0.97	(1.00)		0.38
Charter Schools	1.58	(0.63)	*	4.87	-0.76	(1.21)		0.47
Student Teacher Ratio	0.35	(0.26)		1.42	0.51	(0.37)		1.66
Variance Component								
Level-2 Variance	---				0.40			

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08; PEIMS, 2008-09; Common Core of Data, 2008-09; ^{t} p < .10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

The HLM Analyses of TAKS Scale Scores

Table J3 presents the results from Models 3 and 4 that examined the TAKS scale scores. The math model did not converge and thus the result of the simplified model without random effects was presented. The reading model converged and thus the between-school variance, though statistically not significant, was reported.

Like the HGLM results, the prior year TAKS (as measured by a z score) was positively and significantly related to both outcomes. Special education status was negatively related to both outcomes, but the effect was statistically significant only for TAKS math. Like the HGLM results, charter school students had higher TAKS math scale scores than non-charter school students, but the coefficient was only marginally significant (p<.10).

The effect of a given student's participation in the Collaborative was small, positive for TAKS math but negative for TAKS reading, and not statistically significant. As mentioned earlier, the variance of school effects, as estimated by the HGLM framework, was small for reading and too small to estimate for math.

Table J3: Models 1 and 2: HLM Results Predicting Students Who Meet Standards in Math and Reading (Cycle 1)

	Model 3: TAKS Math Outcomes (Scale Score)			Model 4: TAKS Reading Outcomes (Scale Score)		
	Coefficient	**Std. Error**	**Stat Sig.**	**Coefficient**	**Std. Error**	**Stat Sig.**
Student-Level Data						
Intercept	2100.79	(7.31)	***	2173.56	(10.97)	***
Grade 10	-40.65	(18.88)	*	-23.20	(17.41)	
Grade 11	-10.41	(16.96)		23.24	(16.30)	
Grade 12	-62.43	(25.29)	*	-12.96	(29.74)	
Economic Disadvantage	31.44	(20.86)		1.31	(20.46)	
At Risk Status	-38.13	(20.34)	t	-16.77	(19.11)	
Male	16.45	(13.06)		0.01	(12.62)	
African American	12.94	(20.55)		-13.44	(20.39)	
White	37.53	(35.50)		-6.54	(36.26)	
LEP Status	6.65	(20.15)		-50.28	(20.41)	*
Special Education	-85.37	(31.85)	**	-39.83	(25.85)	
Total Number of Collaborative Hours	0.62	(1.80)		-1.54	(1.91)	
Pretest TAKS Scale Z-score (2007-08)	122.47	(7.35)	***	58.06	(7.52)	***
School-Level Data						
Title 1	-9.72	(39.18)		16.74	(53.69)	
Urban	8.89	(32.37)		-30.61	(44.14)	
Charter Schools	52.39	(29.62)	t	7.36	(45.19)	
Student Teacher Ratio	18.42	(11.83)		5.21	(15.34)	
Variance Component						
Level-2 Variance	---			708.93		
Level-1 Variance	14701.83			12679.02		

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08; PEIMS, 2008-09; Common Core of Data, 2008-09; ^{t} p < .10; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Inspection of School Effects and Additional Analyses

The HLM/HGLM analyses found that the differences in academic results among schools were small in all of the models; however, it is still premature to conclude that the schools or the grantees have no differential effects in academic outcomes. Due to the precision weighting technique that HLM/HGLM employed, the results reported here relied heavily on a group of schools with a larger sample size and a higher level of measurement reliability. To further explore the data and gain insights from them, the evaluation team analyzed the percentages of students passing TAKS standards by school and by grantee.

Table J4 reports the percentages of students who met the state standard in 2008-09 for TAKS math and TAKS reading by school and by grantee. For math, the five Brownsville schools and the School of Excellence in Education school (Rick Hawkins High School) had higher passing rates than the Edgewood, Houston, and Los Fresnos schools. Likewise for ELA, the Brownsville and School of Excellence in Education schools had higher passing rates than the Edgewood and Houston schools. The Los Fresnos school had a 100% passing rate, but the result is unreliable due to the small sample size (*n*=8).

Table J4: Percentage of Students Who Met Standards in TAKS Math and TAKS Reading, School-Level and Grantee-Level Findings (Cycle 1)

	Mathematics			Reading		
	N of Students	% Met Standards	Grantee Average	N of Students	% Met Standards	Grantee Average
BROWNSVILLE						
Hanna High School	41	51.2%	**46.3%**	36	80.6%	**74.2%**
Lopez High School	40	45.0%		44	63.6%	
Pace High School	39	38.5%		43	86.1%	
Porter High School	25	56.0%		31	83.9%	
Rivera High School	27	40.7%		30	56.7%	
EDGEWOOD						
John F. Kennedy High School	15	26.7%	**18.6%**	11	54.6%	**53.9%**
Memorial High School	19	10.5%		15	53.3%	
HOUSTON						
Jones High School	11	18.2%	**27.9%**	15	46.7%	**49.9%**
Lee High School	10	20.0%		11	72.7%	
Reach Charter	10	40.0%		5	20.0%	
Wheatley High School	9	33.3%		10	60.0%	
LOS FRESNOS						
Los Fresnos High School	18	38.9%	**38.9%**	8	100.0%	**100.0%**
SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION						
Rick Hawkins High School	92	83.7%	**83.7%**	89	94.4%	**94.4%**
Average of Percentages		38.7%			67.1%	
SD		18.9%			22.1%	

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08; PEIMS, 2008-09; Common Core of Data, 2008-09

Next, to better understand the differences in achievement among the schools, the evaluation team examined how the school average scale scores changed between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. The analysis presented is only exploratory, as the scale scores from the two school years were not designed to be comparable. To facilitate a broad comparison, we standardized scale scores using a z-score transformation by grade, year, and subject for the two test administration years.[40] The limitation of this analysis is that, because the standardized scores (z scores) are based on the ranking and the relative positions of the thirteen schools in the analysis sample, the changes in some Collaborative schools might have been triggered by changes in other schools across Texas.

Table J5 reports the school-average z-scores in TAKS math and reading separately for the two years and the change in school average values between the two years. Changes of z scores greater than .25 were noted by either positive or negative signs, respectively, for upward and downward changes.

The Brownsville schools had mostly positive changes, except for Lopez High School's performance in TAKS reading. In particular, Porter High School had a notable positive z score change larger than .25 in both subjects (.26 in math and .28 in reading).

The results for the Edgewood, Houston, and Los Fresnos schools were based on the number of cases smaller than 20 per school and thus should be replicated by the future analysis (to be reported in Interim Report #2). The two Edgewood schools had negative changes in both subjects. In particular, John F. Kennedy High School had a large negative change in both subjects (-.49 in math and -.33 in reading). The changes Houston schools experienced were mostly negative and notably large negative changes included -.29 for Lee High School in TAKS math, -0.26 for Jones High School in TAKS reading, and -0.44 for Reach Charter in TAKS reading. Finally, Rick Hawkins High School had no large change of z-scores. Although year-to-year changes were modest (0.01 for math and -0.08 for reading), this school had the highest averages in both subjects in both years, which is consistent with the high passing rate in the two subject areas (reported in Table J4).

[40] The individual scores were first standardized with means and SDs specific to students' grade level and test administration year. Hypothetically, if the average score for 9th graders from 2008-09 was 2,000 and SD was 200, then a raw score of 2,200 for a 9th grader would correspond to a z-score of 1 (=[2,200-2,000]/200).

Table J5: Standardized School Average Scale Scores in TAKS Math and TAKS Reading: Changes from 2007-08 to 2008-09

	TAKS Math							TAKS Reading						
	N	2007-08		2008-09		Change	Stat Sig.	N	2007-08		2008-09		Change	Stat Sig.
		Z-score Mean	SD	Z-score Mean	SD				Z-score Mean	SD	Z-score Mean	SD		
BROWNSVILLE														
Hanna High School	41	0.00	1.11	0.03	1.18	0.03		36	0.25	1.05	0.26	1.35	0.02	
Lopez High School	40	-0.09	0.83	-0.09	0.96	0.00		44	-0.42	0.99	-0.47	1.07	-0.04	
Pace High School	39	-0.23	0.92	-0.16	0.89	0.08		43	-0.05	1.10	0.12	0.93	0.17	
Porter High School	25	0.01	0.90	0.27	1.02	0.26	+	31	-0.17	0.80	0.12	0.90	0.28	+
Rivera High School	27	-0.23	0.72	-0.17	0.76	0.06		30	-0.54	1.04	-0.39	0.89	0.14	
EDGEWOOD														
John F. Kennedy High School	15	-0.01	1.21	-0.50	0.87	-0.49	-	11	-0.08	1.26	-0.41	1.05	-0.33	-
Memorial High School	19	-0.60	0.71	-0.74	0.54	-0.14		15	-0.67	0.91	-0.71	0.74	-0.05	
HOUSTON														
Jones High School	11	-0.55	0.95	-0.54	0.60	0.00		15	-0.28	0.72	-0.55	0.98	-0.26	-
Lee High School	10	0.16	1.12	-0.13	1.05	-0.29	-	11	0.22	0.61	0.08	0.89	-0.14	
Reach Charter	10	-0.71	0.80	-0.55	1.11	0.15		5	-0.77	0.56	-1.21	0.67	-0.44	-
Wheatley High School	9	-0.08	0.99	-0.24	1.05	-0.16		10	-0.27	0.77	-0.36	0.47	-0.09	
LOS FRESNOS														
Los Fresnos High School	18	-0.23	0.71	-0.28	0.86	-0.04		8	0.25	0.97	0.36	0.52	0.11	
SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION														
Rick Hawkins High School	92	0.51	1.00	0.52	0.90	0.01		89	0.57	0.71	0.49	0.63	-0.08	

Source: PEIMS, 2007-08; PEIMS, 2008-09; Common Core of Data, 2008-09
Note: + when the change in z-scores was greater than .25; - when greater than -.25.

Conclusion

The HLM/HGLM analyses did not find a statistically significant impact of the hours students spent in the Collaborative program. Among other individual-level factors, the most consistent predictors were the pretest TAKS result and special education status. Special education students had generally worse results in TAKS math and reading (the results were significant in three out of four models). Among the school-level predictors, charter schools had positive and significant and marginally significant results in TAKS math but not for TAKS reading. The HLM/HGLM analyses found that there was a little variation in TAKS results between schools. The additional, exploratory descriptive analysis of schools allowed us to describe the general patterns/trends for the five grantee groups:

- Brownsville schools experienced higher passing rates in TAKS reading and math than the average passing rates of the analysis sample. Most Brownsville schools had a moderate increase in z scores between 2007-08 and 2008-09.
- Edgewood schools had relatively low passing rates in math and reading. The schools generally experienced decreases in scale scores (as measured by z scores) in both subjects. John F. Kennedy High School reported a large decrease in TAKS performance in both subjects. This result, however, is based on a small number of students per school.
- Houston schools had relatively low passing rates in TAKS math and reading. They generally experienced a decrease in scale scores (as measured by z scores) in both subjects. Decreases in scale scores were reported by Lee High School in math and by Jones High School and Reach Charter School in reading. This result, however, is based on a small number of students per school.

- The Los Fresnos School had a lower than the average passing rate for math and had no substantial change in z scores in math between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. No inferences should be made about TAKS reading results, as the sample size was only 8 students.
- The School of Excellence in Education School (Rick Hawkins High School) had the highest passing rates in TAKS reading and math, and the highest average scale scores (as measured by z-scores) in both school years. Year-to-year changes, however, were small.

While the limitation of the descriptive analysis was noted, the evaluation team plans to conduct a similar analysis in Interim Report #2. The current database includes only 13 Cycle 1 schools. Interim Report #2 will add 31 Cycle 2 schools to the existing sample, which should strengthen the precision of measurement and allow the evaluation team to explore further the implication of school-level and grantee-level factors on Collaborative student achievement.