Texas High School Completion and Success

Final Report on Performance of Programs Authorized by House Bill 2237

A report to the 82ⁿᵈ Texas Legislature

**Submitted in fulfillment of
HB 2237 Section 18 (80ᵗʰ Texas Legislature) by the
Office of Planning, Grants, and Evaluation and ICF International**

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Submitted in fulfillment of HB 2237, Section 18 (80th Texas Legislature)

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

AEIS	Academic Excellence Indicator System		SERVE	Higher Education and Workforce Readiness Programs: Student Excellence and Readiness through Volunteers in Education
AP	Advanced Placement		SS	Success Skills
ASP	Approved Service Provider		Student Clubs	Grants for Student Clubs
BIA	Banks in Action		TA	Technical Assistance
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation		TAKS	Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills™
CDR	Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program		TDRPP	Texas Dropout Recovery Pilot Program
CFT	Communities Foundation of Texas		TEA	Texas Education Agency
Council	High School Completion and Success Initiative Council		TEC	Texas Education Code
CWAP	Careers With a Purpose		THECB	Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
ECHS	Early College High School		THSP	Texas High School Project
ELA	English Language Arts		TNGTI	Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program
ESC	educational service center		TSI	Texas Success Initiative
FL	Financial Literacy Program		T-STEM	Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Initiative
FY	fiscal year		URL	Uniform Resource Locator
GAA	General Appropriations Act			
GED	General Educational Development certificate			
HB	House Bill			
HSRR	High School Redesign and Restructuring			
IB	International Baccalaureate			
IHE	Institution of Higher Education			
ISP	Intensive Summer Programs			
JA	Junior Achievement			
MIC	Mathematics Instructional Coaches Pilot Program			
MSDF	Michael and Susan Dell Foundation			
NEFE	National Endowment for Financial Education			
PD	professional development			
R-Tech	Technology-Based Supplemental Instruction Pilot Program: Rural Technology			
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test			

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

Section 18 of House Bill (HB) 2237 (80th Texas Legislature) directed the Texas

Education Agency (TEA) to deliver to the legislature a preliminary report on December 1,

2008 (TEA, 2008), and a final report on December 1, 2010, regarding the impact of

programs for which grants have been awarded under Subchapter M,[1] Chapter 39 of the

Texas Education Code (TEC). This document constitutes the final report in fulfillment of

this mandate. It begins with an explanation of the legislative context of the report and

TEA's reporting approach. Then, descriptions of funded programs, evaluation findings,

and conclusions regarding the performance of HB 2237 grant programs are provided.

Appendix A provides a complete list of grant programs to be discussed in this report.

Legislative Context

HB 2237 extended existing initiatives funded in the 78th and 79th Texas Legislatures that

focused on dropout prevention and the promotion of college and career readiness. In

addition, HB 2237 authorized the creation of new grant programs specifically designed to

implement and support high school completion and college and career readiness

initiatives.

Rider 53 of the General Appropriations Act (GAA, III, 80th Texas Legislature) provided

significant funding for programs authorized by HB 2237 that focused on these two critical

areas of need. A total of $28.71 million per year for fiscal years (FYs) 2008 and 2009

was appropriated for high school reform strategies by Rider 53(a). An additional $25

million per year for the same biennium was appropriated for programs that targeted

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[1] At the time HB 2237 was passed, the High School Completion and Success Initiative was written in Subchapter L. Subchapter L was later redesignated as Subchapter M by the 81st Legislature.

students at risk of dropping out of high school by Rider 53(b). In the 2010-11 biennium, HB 2237 grant programs were further funded by Rider 51 (GAA, III, 81st Texas Legislature). Rider 51 appropriated $48.65 million in FY10 and $37.33 million in FY11[2] to be used for such purposes as supporting research-based instructional support and professional development to secondary and middle schools with students at risk of dropping out of school, and for programs supporting the improvement of high school graduation rates and postsecondary readiness pursuant to HB 2237.

Approach to Assessment of Program Impact

Under Section 18 of HB 2237, TEA was directed to assess the impact of programs for which grants were awarded under Subchapter M, Chapter 39, TEC, on three key outcomes: (1) student achievement, including student performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), high school completion rates, and college readiness; (2) teacher effectiveness; and (3) cost effectiveness. In addition to this requirement to assess program impact, TEA was also required under Rider 69 (GAA, III, 81st Texas Legislature)[3] to conduct an evaluation of all general revenue-funded programs. Given these requirements, an approach to allocating resources among performance assessments and grant program evaluations was developed. Criteria were established by which Subchapter M grant initiatives were identified for an impact assessment of relevant Section 18 outcomes or a more comprehensive evaluation.

Thus, grant-funded HB 2237 initiatives listed in this report fall into one of two categories: (1) programs subject to the reporting requirements of Section 18 that received an impact

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[2] Originally, $50.81 million was appropriated for each fiscal year of the biennium (2010 and 2011), but budget reductions subsequently reduced the amounts to $48,647,833 for FY10 and to $37,332,500 for FY11.
[3] Rider 69 (GAA, III, 81st Texas Legislature) was preceded by a similar requirement under Rider 79 (GAA, III, 80th Texas Legislature). Rider 69 clarified that final reports are to be delivered to the legislature after the fourth fiscal year of the program's implementation.

assessment, or (2) programs subject to the reporting requirements of Section 18 that received a comprehensive evaluation (with separate reports forthcoming to the legislature).

Findings

Findings demonstrated that HB 2237 programs were associated with positive gains on student outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and cost effectiveness. It is worth noting that the majority of findings on student outcomes to date reflected outcomes related to positive student achievement gains on TAKS. Both dropout data and graduation data are not available for a given school year until the following November (school level data) and the following March (student level data). In addition, grant activities often targeted students in middle school and/or Grades 9 and 10, for whom graduation outcomes will remain unknown for several additional years. Finally, Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and ACT data do not become available to TEA until after students complete their senior year. Together, these factors limited ability to provide results indicating the impact of programs on high school graduation and on college and career readiness for this report. However, TAKS achievement, as well as other data provided here, provided some early evidence that these grant programs are associated with positive impacts on student achievement and may, therefore, ultimately both prevent students from dropping out of school and improve graduation rates.

Student Academic Performance

Six programs that underwent comprehensive evaluations demonstrated clear evidence of positive student academic performance: (1) Mathematics Instructional Coaches Pilot Program (MIC), (2) Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program (CDR), (3) TEA Intensive Summer Programs (ISP), (4) Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and

Mathematics Academies (T-STEM), (5) Early College High Schools (ECHS), and (6) Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program (TNGTI). For these six programs, the following findings reflect statistically significant differences between the outcomes of students in the given HB 2237 program and the outcomes of comparison students:

- All six programs were associated with significant gains in TAKS-Math.

- Four out of six programs (CDR, ISP, ECHS, and TNGTI) were associated with significant gains in TAKS-Reading/English Language Arts (ELA).

- Three programs (CDR, T-STEM, and ECHS) were associated with significant gains in TAKS-Science.

- One program (ECHS) was associated with significant gains in TAKS-Social Studies.

- Two programs (T-STEM and ECHS) were associated with significant improvement in attendance.

- One program (ECHS) was associated with significant improvement in the likelihood of being promoted to Grade 10.

- One program (ECHS) was associated with a significant increase in Grade 11 students' participation in accelerated learning courses (such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), or dual credit).

Additionally, within MIC schools, students who were taught for two years by teachers participating in MIC (and whose teacher in the second year had participated in MIC for two years) were more likely to meet TAKS commended status (a marker of college readiness) than students who had never had an MIC teacher as of 2009-10 (2.65 times more likely among middle school students and 1.61 times more likely among high school students). Finally, one program that underwent an impact assessment - Higher

Education and Workforce Readiness Program: Student Excellence and Readiness through Volunteers in Education (SERVE) - found progress in student achievement. Students in SERVE demonstrated significant gains from pre-test to post-test on three out of six areas of content knowledge. SERVE students also demonstrated a significant gain in attitudes and engagement for two out of six content areas.

Teacher Effectiveness

Only one HB 2237 grant program (MIC) had the improvement of teacher effectiveness as a primary goal of the program, although four additional program evaluations included examination of teacher professional development (PD) opportunities. Of these five programs, four (MIC, Intensive Technology-Based Academic Intervention, ISP, and the Texas Dropout Recovery Pilot Program [TDRPP]) reported progress. One program, the Technology-Based Supplemental Instruction Pilot Program: Rural Technology (R-Tech), demonstrated mixed findings for teacher effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness findings included the following:

- MIC Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 teachers reported that the program increased their mathematics content knowledge, teaching knowledge, and feelings of effectiveness. The program appeared to be particularly effective in supporting new teachers. Greater exposure to MIC coaching (i.e., participating in MIC for two consecutive years) was associated with higher student achievement on TAKS-Math.

- Approximately 70% of Intensive Technology-Based Academic Intervention grantees reported that their teachers mostly or always used skills learned during PD to implement a technology-based lesson that would result in a high level of student engagement.

- All ISP administrators and 79% of teachers reported that ISP participation improved teacher effectiveness.

- The TDRPP evaluation included a survey on which teachers reported their levels of self-efficacy for influencing student motivation and achievement. On a 9-point scale, TDRPP teachers had an average of 6.94 on this measure, indicating that they perceived there was "quite a bit" that they could do as teachers to influence student motivation and achievement.

- R-Tech teachers indicated on surveys that they had a greater awareness of technology-based learning opportunities for students, were able to improve their technical skills and abilities, and had a better understanding of at-risk student needs as a result of participating in R-Tech. However, teacher surveys and focus groups of R-Tech grantees indicated that teachers lacked knowledge of R-Tech resources, and most grantees reported that they did not participate in R-Tech PD activities. Teachers also reported low levels of agreement with statements about R-Tech's goals, which may indicate that most teachers lacked familiarity with the grant. R-Tech was intended to serve as a supplemental program and some schools hired staff, or involved only a limited number of teachers, to engage students in grant program activities.

Cost Effectiveness

Many HB 2237 grant programs were still underway at the time of this report, and had not yet reported final expenditures, impeding the assessment of cost effectiveness. An additional challenge was linking cost per student to the impact on student outcomes because few consistent findings were observed for student outcomes in programs that also reported cost per student data. However, findings from two program evaluations

(TNGTI and MIC) that assessed the link between cost data and student achievement data suggested that these programs were cost-effective, as follows:

- In TNGTI, spending a greater portion of funds on the summer transition program than on the early warning data system or intervention was associated with greater gains on student TAKS performance.

- Students participating in MIC programs demonstrated strong student achievement outcomes, while the estimated cost per student ($131 for Cycle 1 grantees) was lower than for most other HB 2237 programs that reported these data. Because a goal of MIC is to increase teacher content knowledge and instructional expertise, the benefits of MIC may spread across future years as MIC teachers continue to teach students, leveraging the state's initial investment.

SERVE had the lowest cost per student among all of the HB 2237 programs that reported these data, with an estimated average cost per student of $29. Finally, TDRPP provided some initial base funding to grantees, but all additional grant dollars were awarded based solely on providing evidence of impacting students (a pay-for-performance model).

Overall, it is clear that participation in HB 2237 grant programs was associated with gains for students and schools. Although challenges remain, data on student performance, teacher effectiveness, and cost effectiveness to date suggest the positive impact of these initiatives as a whole. As TEA was successful at awarding HB 2237 grants to schools with high populations of students at risk for dropping out (as appropriate to the grant program's mission) and as grantees themselves appear to have been largely successful at targeting students at risk of dropping out, these indications of success occurred in a context of high risk. That is, the HB 2237 grant programs appear

to be making inroads at improving student achievement and teacher effectiveness among those schools and students most in need. A more complete picture of the impacts of these grant programs will be available by January 2013 (pending evaluation funding), as additional data for the programs undergoing comprehensive evaluations will be available for analysis.

Appendix A: Grant Programs Included in This Report

Table A-1 includes a listing of HB 2237 grants, as well as the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) to the published evaluation reports associated with each program that underwent a comprehensive evaluation. Results for programs that underwent impact assessments are included in Appendix B.

Table A-1: Programs Included in this Report

Program	Location of Evaluation Report
Comprehensive Whole School Reform	
T-STEM	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2904&menu_id=949
ECHS	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2904&menu_id=949
HSRR	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2904&menu_id=949
Targeted Student Interventions	
Student Clubs	See Appendix B of this report
CDR	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2898&menu_id=949
Intensive Technology-Based Academic Intervention	See Appendix B of this report
ISP	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2908&menu_id=949
SERVE	See Appendix B of this report
R-Tech	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2926&menu_id=949
TDRPP	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2898&menu_id=949
TNGTI	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2898&menu_id=949
Effective Teachers and Leaders	
MIC	http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2914&menu_id=949

The following list consists of HB 2237 grants that were either not subject to the reporting requirements of Section 18, were not programs that directly impacted teachers or students, or were too limited in size to make reporting cost-effective. The following grants were not directly evaluated or assessed for impact and therefore are excluded from this report, although, in some cases, the primary program with which they were associated was evaluated (e.g., T-STEM):

- Study of Best Practices for Dropout Prevention
- Professional Activities for Teachers and Administrators
- Teacher Reading Academies
- Mathematics, Science, and Technology Teacher Preparation Activities
- District-wide College and Career Pathways
- Campus Turnaround Team Support

- ECHS Special Project, San Antonio Independent School District
- ECHS Small and Rural District Planning Grants
- ECHS Professional Development Training Grants
- ECHS Professional Development Network
- ECHS Site Design Coaching
- Ignite/SystemsGo Aeroscience Program
- Middle-school Students in Texas: Algebra Ready (MSTAR) Pilot Project
- P-16 Early Warning System Platform
- THSP Network/Exemplar Activities Program, Continuation
- T-STEM Early Innovator, Waco Independent School District
- T-STEM Co-curricular Engineering Activities/Robotics
- T-STEM Pre-Service Teacher Preparation Program
- Intensive Summer Programs to Facilitate Transition from High School to Postsecondary Institution[4]
- Mathematics, Science, and Technology Teacher Preparation Academies[5]
- Statewide Tools for Teaching Excellence[6]

Technical assistance grants are also excluded from this report.

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[4] This program is being evaluated by THECB and therefore is excluded from this report.
[5] This program is being evaluated by THECB and therefore is excluded from this report.
[6] This program is being evaluated by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and therefore is excluded from this report.