

United Way of Tarrant County
Learn Well Initiative
Year One Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

Period: July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011

Opening Statement

July 1, 2010 marked the beginning of the United Way of Tarrant County’s implementation of the “Learn Well” Education initiative. Three strategies were funded in the effort to reach the **2020 bold goal of achieving 20% more on-time graduations from selected schools**. These strategies include programs to promote early learning among children aged 0-5, reading skills among children in 1st through 3rd grade, and career/graduation planning for middle school students. Each of these efforts includes components designed to encourage parent participation, early identification and intervention with students-at-risk, and collaboration with community organizations. It is expected that over the course of 10 years, these early intervention efforts will result in a cumulative effect of increasing graduation rates for the cohorts of participating students.

Numbers Served

	Actual Number Served	Target Number	% of Target Reached	Key Participant Characteristics
AISD Early Childhood-Caregivers	1068 caregivers	1260 caregivers	85%	440 parents attended daytime series with their 555 toddler children; 628 parents attended evening series
AISD- Pre K students	512	450	114%	26% of participants were enrolled in PreK4
BISD PAT	107	96	111%	19% of children were referred for needed healthcare; 14% were developmentally at-risk
BISD Childcare	350	471	74%	28% of children were developmentally at-risk
FWISD Reading	68	180	38%	40% First graders, 44% Second graders, 16% Third graders
FWISD Middle School	405	450-600	90%	40% Sixth graders, 28% Seventh graders, 32% Eighth graders

Key Findings Year to Date

AISD PreK4 children with participating parents scored higher than non-participants at the beginning, middle and end of year testing points for most measurements. Participating PreK4 students made **greater gains** in letter sounds, words, and overall literacy; particularly during the middle of year periods when participation levels were at their peak.

Baseline Ages and Stages Questionnaires were completed with 85 children in the Parents As Teachers (PAT) program and 116 children in the childcare centers. These assessment tools will be administered again in the 2011-2012 funding cycle. Results from baseline data indicate that the proportion of at-risk children is far greater in childcare centers than the PAT program.

Of the 68 children participating in the Reading Intervention, 77% showed improvement in reading levels and 98% of those with a post-test assessment showed an average increase of 3 levels on the Benchmark Assessment.

In the FWISD Middle School program, the average number of sessions received by each student was 2.09. Twenty percent of the 405 students received 4 or more sessions, though these tended to be higher-risk students receiving in-school suspensions. There were no improvements observed in attendance or core grades.

Successes

There was such a high demand for early childhood programs that AISD offered additional series of their Toddler Time intervention and BISD has an extensive waiting list for their Parents as Teachers program. Participating 4 year-olds with AISD made greater gains towards kindergarten readiness than non-participants. FWISD elementary students improved their attitudes towards reading and increased their reading levels. FWISD middle school students were engaged to begin the process of reducing their risks of dropping out.

Areas of Concern

In early childhood programs, parents of children at the highest risk levels have not been engaged in the interventions. At the elementary level, the program intensity (# of days) was far shorter than the evidence-based model and was insufficient to bring children to grade-level reading ability. At the middle school level, participant's baseline data showed a long period of increasing risk. It will be challenging for College and Career Coaches to provide a sufficiently intense intervention to stop and reverse this trajectory.

Continuous Improvement Efforts

- All districts have plans to continue building relationships with community partners to enhance existing programming.
- New incentives/outreach to attract at-risk populations are being considered by the districts.
- Trainings will be held for staff to ensure best practices.
- Better data collection practices are being implemented to ensure that outcomes can be evaluated.

Questions/Comments for Further Exploration


All programs should consider the use of summer months to continue programming. Substantial academic losses occur during this period and disproportionately impact low-income children (Afterschool Alliance, 2010).

Overall, program intensity appears to be important for all three levels. It will be helpful to consider the right balance between breadth (#’s reached) and depth (intensity of service) for all programs. In the second year it will be crucial for programs to accurately capture hours of program participation so that these questions can be answered empirically.

Recommendations

1. Continue efforts to elicit participation from at-risk students and/or caregivers.
2. Continue working towards systematic collection of outcome, output and service unit data.
3. Continue the pursuit of summer programming for elementary students and increase summer programming for middle school students.

Dashboard

Is the overall Learn Well Initiative on target?	Strategy	Grade for achieved targets	Grade for results observed among targets
	Early Childhood	A	B+
	Elementary Reading	C	B
	Middle School Transition	B+	C-