

Evaluation of the Texas Middle School Program for AP* Spanish
Full Report

February 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The state demographer of Texas predicts that by the year 2040 approximately 66% of public elementary and secondary students in Texas will be Hispanic (Murdock, 2006). While not all of these students will speak Spanish as a first language, increases of over 180% in the demand for programs serving English language learners are projected by 2040. In addition to possible language barriers, the low-income status of many of these students will present further challenges to their potential for academic success. Driscoll (1999) found that family income is one of the key contributors to high school graduation.

A broad base of research points to structural inhibitors such as the practices of schools that limit the academic success of poor and minority students. Because many of these students are enrolled in low-resource schools and/or are trapped in remedial programs or non-college preparatory classes, they do not always have access to the “opportunity” infrastructure of schools (Conchas, 2001). Numerous studies suggest that providing higher level instruction and a rigorous curriculum enhances the performance of all students, especially those who have not previously demonstrated high academic achievement (Learning Point Associates, 2004). Expectations regarding a student’s academic potential and exposure to the skills and values associated with high achievement have also been shown to have a significant influence on student engagement and success in school (American Educational Research Association, 2004; Learning Point Associates, 2004).

This report provides information on the evaluation of a program developed and piloted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) designed to promote the academic success of low-income, Spanish-speaking students.

Program History

With a grant from the U.S. Department of Education’s (USDE) Advanced Placement Incentive (API) program, TEA established the Texas Middle School Program for AP* Spanish¹ in 2000. The project was designed to encourage the teaching of the AP Spanish Language course at the middle school level for students whose home language was Spanish and who were identified as economically disadvantaged. The goal was to use these students’ first language as an academic asset to boost student academic success, promote self-confidence in school, and support aspirations and preparation for college.

Seven school districts broadly representing most regions of the state piloted the program in the 2000–01 school year. With another grant from API, in 2002 TEA supported the replication of the program at 13 additional scale-up sites across the state. In March 2005, TEA seeded a statewide expansion of the program with planning grants to an additional 59 sites.

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Study Overview

In 2005, the Advanced Academics Unit of the Division of Curriculum at TEA contracted with Resources for Learning, LLC (RFL), to conduct an evaluation of the longer term impacts associated with participation by low-income, Spanish-speaking eighth graders in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish. Participating students consistently performed well on the AP Spanish Language examination, and, in addition, anecdotal reports from staff at the pilot and scale-up sites suggested that as a result of participation, student absenteeism and disciplinary infractions declined; students' overall grades improved; and upon entering high school, students enrolled in more advanced classes and performed better on state tests than students from this population typically did. This study was designed to investigate these claims. Because a primary focus of the study is the long-term outcomes of program participation, analysis focused primarily on the pilot program, which began in 2000.

The purpose of this evaluation was to

- identify relationships between program participation for students participating in the program at the pilot campuses and long-term, school-related student outcomes;²
- document student perceptions of impacts; and
- provide ongoing statewide program implementation information and statistics related to participation and performance that could inform the future of the program.

Evaluation Questions

1. Did students who participated in the program have higher attendance rates in high school than their non-participant peers?
2. Did students who participated in the program perform better on state tests in high school than their non-participant peers?
3. Did students who participated in the program complete AP courses in high school in higher numbers and at a higher rate than their non-participant peers?
4. How did students who participated in the program perform on AP exams in high school?
5. Did students who participated in the program graduate early or on the Distinguished Achievement Plan at a higher rate than their non-participant peers?
6. Did students who participated in the program feel the program impacted them positively in terms of academics, future opportunities, and relationships?
7. What are some issues that are likely to impact the program in the future?

Participants

The evaluation focused on data for three cohorts of students at the pilot campuses, those who participated in the program in 2000–01 (346 students), those who participated in 2001–02 (416 students), and those who participated in 2002–03 (595 students).

Participating districts provided student identification information. The study also included peer groups composed of all other Hispanic, Spanish-speaking students at the

² It should be noted that discipline-related outcomes were excluded from the evaluation design due to the unreliability and variability of discipline-related data primarily because of inconsistency in reporting by school districts.

same campuses in seventh grade who did not participate in the program and who had a Grade 7 score on the state assessment. This allowed evaluators to compare the outcomes for participating students to school averages for the group of students who were very similar demographically.

Methods

Data collection methods included requests for student identification and AP exam performance information from pilot districts. Data on student outcomes were collected from the appropriate divisions at TEA. Surveys were administered at pilot campuses by local coordinators, and the evaluators conducted a document review of program information. Data on student performance on the AP Spanish Language exam were collected from both the pilot districts and the scale-up districts and College Board score distribution reports provided by TEA.

Student Data

Based on the student identification information provided by districts, the evaluators requested student performance data on the student assessment required by the State of Texas during the years of the study. Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) data for the years 1999–2002 and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) data for subsequent years were requested from the Student Assessment Division of TEA. Data on student characteristics, attendance, course taking, and graduation were requested from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Division of TEA.

For the analysis of participating student characteristics and long-term outcomes (attendance, TAKS performance, AP course taking, and graduation), participant group data were compared to peer group data. In those outcome areas for which a test of statistical significance was appropriate, i.e., where a prior-year value (attendance, TAKS performance) was available, additional comparisons were conducted with similarly sized subsets of the peer groups so that difference in group size did not affect the results of the statistical testing. Regression analyses adjusted for previous performance in these areas.

Surveys

Surveys were used to assess student perceptions of program impacts, including perceived changes in academic performance, relationships at school, college expectations and aspirations, and plans for the future. Through PEIMS data received from TEA, the evaluators identified students who participated in Year 2 of the program who were still enrolled in the district and attending high school. A total of 230 students were identified for participation. Surveys were sent to local program coordinators for administration in Winter/Spring 2006, and 111 surveys were returned for a response rate of 48%. Surveys included items extracted from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS).³ Survey questions

³ The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) is a representative study that explores the causes of health-related behaviors of adolescents in grades 7 through 12 and their outcomes in young adulthood. Add Health seeks to examine how social contexts (families, friends, peers, schools, neighborhoods, and communities) influence adolescents' health and risk behaviors. For more information, see <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>. The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 88) is a major

selected from these instruments were primarily related to academics and future plans. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey data.

Program Data

This portion of the evaluation included historical, district-reported program participation and exam performance information from both the pilot and scale-up sites, College Board score distribution reports provided by TEA, and progress reports to TEA from the 59 sites receiving planning grants. Descriptive statistics were used to report information on program participation and examination performance.

Study Limitations

The evaluation was dependent on district provision of student identification numbers. This data was incomplete and/or irregular in some cases, so the group identified for inclusion in the evaluation was smaller than the originally reported participant group. Also, little is known about the initial grant awards and requirements or local program development and decision-making processes. Thus, this investigation does not benefit from information about local circumstances at the time of participation that can be linked to students, including local context, selection processes for student participation, or differentiation in services provided. Because all of these factors could have influenced the long-term outcomes, it is important to recognize that the evaluation describes trends overall that are likely attributable to program participation but that are subject to considerable variation at the local level. Analysis of characteristics of participating students indicates that participating districts were more selective in identifying students for participation in the program in the first year of implementation than in Years 2 and 3, particularly in terms of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) status and prior performance on state examinations. The evaluation methodology was designed to control for prior performance issues that could have influenced long-term, school-related outcomes for participants. However, other factors could have come into play, the identification and measurement of which were beyond the scope of the evaluation. Finally, the first group of students participating in the program (Participant Group 1) was the only group for which complete data on course taking and graduation through Grade 12 were available. Most findings for Participant Group 1 were substantiated by analysis of data for students who participated in the second year of the program (Participant Group 2). While Participant Group 2 was more representative of the target group (low-income, Spanish-speaking students), data were only available through 11th grade, so findings should be read with these circumstances in mind. Survey data might also contain positive bias. Other limitations with specific data are discussed in the relevant chapters of this report.

Summary of Findings

Characteristics of Participants

- In the pilot year of the program, while the participant group reflected the economic status of its peer group, grantees appeared to be selective in identifying higher

longitudinal effort by the National Center for Education Statistics designed to provide trend data about critical transitions experienced by students as they leave middle or junior high school and progress through high school and into postsecondary institutions or the work force. For more information, see <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/>.

performing students (as measured by prior performance on state examinations) and fewer Limited English Proficient (LEP) students to participate.

- Overall, in the second and third years of the pilot program, eighth-grade students enrolled in the program tended to be more representative of their Hispanic, Spanish-speaking peers.
- In Years 2 and 3, in comparison with peer groups, the program served a higher percentage of “LEP exempt” students who were identified for exemption on statewide examinations.
- Schools/districts tended to select more females than males for participation in the program.

Relationships Between Program Participation and Long-Term, School-Related Student Outcomes

- Data do not suggest that attendance over the long term is impacted by program participation.
- It is possible that program participation positively impacts TAKS performance in reading/English language arts.
- Students who participated in the program were more likely than their peers to complete one or more AP courses in high school.
- Students who participated in the program were more likely than their peers to complete an AP course in English Language and Composition in high school.
- The most frequently taken AP examinations in high school by participating students were English Language and Composition, U.S. History, AP Spanish Literature and Composition, English Literature and Composition, and Calculus AB.
- Information on AP exam performance by participants in high school was limited, but data suggest that participating students as a group do not perform well on AP exams in high school in subject areas other than Spanish.
- Students who participated in the program were more likely than their peers to graduate early and/or graduate under the Distinguished Achievement Program.

Student Perceptions of Program Impacts

- The majority of students reported positive impacts on their academic lives.
- Relationships and career awareness represented other areas in which students were positively impacted.

- Students did not perceive English language skills or relationships with counselors to be areas of high positive impact.
- The majority of participating students aspired to advanced degrees.

Trends and Issues With Potential Future Implications

- Schools and districts implementing the program tended to continue and expand the program at the original campuses and at additional campuses in the district.
- Program growth was most consistent in districts serving a majority Hispanic student population.
- The majority of participating eighth graders earned a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Spanish Language examination making them eligible for college credit.
- Changes to the exam format could impact student performance.
- Statewide participation in the program should increase in 2006–07 to approximately 2,000 students with new program implementation at an additional 59 campuses.

Conclusions

- Schools and/or districts tended to be more selective in program enrollment the initial program pilot year. Student participants were less representative of their Hispanic, Spanish-speaking peers and most were already higher performing students (in terms of performance on state assessments). In subsequent years, sites tended to open up enrollment to a broader group of students that was more representative of the eligible pool of Spanish-speaking students on their campuses. Findings from Year 1, when districts were more selective, were generally supported by Year 2 findings, when selection was more representative.
- Data suggest that participating students performed better in high school reading TAKS than their peers.
- Participating students took more advanced courses (specifically AP courses) in high school than their peers and graduated early and/or having met requirements for the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP).
- Survey data indicate that student self-confidence and motivation and academic self-image were positively affected by program participation.
- Survey data indicating that participation in the program improved student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships suggests that the program helps to build some of the social scaffolding in school that research suggests supports the academic success of low-income, language-minority students.
- Enhanced bilingual skills are of value to participating students on a variety of levels.

- Only about a third of survey respondents reported participation in college preparatory programs. Further, limited data suggesting poor performance on AP exams by participants could be indicative of underpreparedness for the rigors of college. This is important as survey data indicate many participants plan to pursue advanced degrees at four-year colleges and universities.
- Overall, data indicate that the program is sustainable once established and is replicable both within districts and across a range of types of school communities.
- Eighth-grade participants consistently scored well on the AP Spanish Language examination. The drop of 15% in exam scores of 3 or better associated with changes to the exam in 2005 has possible future implications. With changes expected to the 2007 exam, teachers at the existing program sites need to be made aware of exam changes and adjust their strategies to better prepare their students for success.
- Finally, while this study has shown some interesting preliminary findings about the possible impacts of the program on participating students broadly speaking, it also has raised some provocative questions about the context for the program at individual schools and the impacts on individual participants or types of participants.

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the evaluators present the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- The Texas Education Agency (TEA) should investigate ways to support programs that provide continued support to participating students as they move into high school including integration with established programs that promote college readiness for students underrepresented in higher education.
- TEA should investigate ways to provide ongoing or periodic supplemental training or support a network for AP teachers in existing middle school programs to keep them up-to-date with course and exam requirements.
- TEA should investigate funding sources or establish partnerships to continue the program and support for schools offering it.
- TEA should support continued research on program approaches and impacts to identify best practices in local program implementation and develop a greater understanding of the impacts on individual students and different types of student groups.

CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

Context

Projecting a rapid growth scenario for Texas over the next 30 years, Dr. Steve H. Murdock, the state demographer of Texas, predicts that by the year 2040, approximately 66% of public elementary and secondary students in Texas will be Hispanic (Murdock, 2006). While not all of these students will speak Spanish as a first language, Murdock projects increases of over 180% in the demand for programs serving English language learners by 2040.⁴ Students of “limited English proficiency” as defined by Texas Education Code (TEC § 29.052), many of whom are recent immigrants to the U.S., are considered by the state to be “at risk” of dropping out of school (TEC § 29.056). The low-income status of many of these students will present further challenges to their potential for academic success. Driscoll (1999) found that family income, in addition to educational expectations and past academic performance, are key contributors to high school graduation.

In addition to achievement barriers presented by student language and socioeconomic status, a broad base of research points to structural inhibitors such as the practices of schools that limit the academic success of poor and minority students. Enrolled in low-resource schools or trapped in remedial programs or non-college preparatory classes as many poor and minority students are, these students neither understand nor have access to the “opportunity” infrastructure of schools (Conchas, 2001). Mehan, Hubbard, Lintz, and Villanueva (1994, p. 1) described the success of programs for previously low-achieving students that teach the “implicit culture of the classroom” and “the hidden curriculum” of the school without which these students are unlikely to experience academic success. In his study of why some Latino students succeed while others fail, Conchas found that “Latino students’ experiences and perceptions of schooling differed according to the program in which they were enrolled, and the subsequent sociocultural process to which they were exposed” (p. 487). Both researchers highlight social networks and supportive relationships built around academic success as key to student achievement.

Numerous studies support this research suggesting that providing higher level instruction and a rigorous curriculum enhances the performance of all students, especially those who have not previously demonstrated high academic achievement (Learning Point Associates, 2004). Expectations regarding a student’s academic potential and exposure to the skills and values associated with high achievement also have been shown to have a significant influence on student engagement and success in school (American Educational Research Association, 2004; Learning Point Associates, 2004).

⁴ In Texas, over the last five years, the number of students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) by public schools has increased approximately 25%, from 570,603 students in 2000–01 to 711,737 in 2005–06. The vast majority of this group is Hispanic and speaks Spanish as a first language (Texas Performance Education Information Management System, 2005). Nationally, over the last several decades, the population of school-age children in the United States who do not speak English as a first language has more than doubled from 9% to 19% with native Spanish speakers representing the largest subpopulation of that group (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

Over the next 25 years, the Texas public school system will be challenged to address the educational needs of a changing student population. Research on programs that improve the success of low-income, Spanish-speaking students should be of considerable interest to policymakers, the education community, parents, and students. This report provides information on the evaluation of one such program developed and piloted by the Texas Education Agency.

History

In 2000, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education through the Advanced Placement Incentive (API) program to implement the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish.⁵ The project was designed to encourage the teaching of the AP Spanish Language course at the middle-school level for students whose home language was Spanish⁶ (including students identified by districts as Limited English Proficient or LEP) and who were identified as economically disadvantaged (eligible for free-and-reduced-price lunch). The goal was to use these students' first language as an academic asset to boost student academic success, promote self-confidence in school, and support aspirations and preparation for college.

AP courses and examinations, which are offered by the College Board, are staples of college preparatory programs in 60% of American high schools (College Board, nd). Over 35 AP courses in 20 subject areas are offered. In 2005, 2.1 million AP exams were administered worldwide. The curriculum for AP courses is developed by the College Board in collaboration with committees of teachers and college faculty. Thousands of College Board consultants nationwide provide training in the use of the curriculum and instructional strategies to teachers identified to teach AP courses. Completion of an AP exam with a passing score of 3 or better (on a 5-point scale) is recognized as the equivalent of college-level proficiency by 90% of colleges and universities. Thus, students scoring 3 or better on AP exams are usually eligible for college credit for these courses upon entering postsecondary education. (For more information on AP courses and exams, visit the AP Central website at: www.apcentral.collegeboard.com.)

Pilot Program (2000)

Seven districts applied for and were awarded program grants from TEA to pilot the program in the 2000–01 school year. Detailed information on the grant application process and requirements, award amounts, and local implementation processes was not available for this report.⁷ Available information was limited to the names of the districts awarded grants, the number of middle schools in those districts establishing pilot programs, and limited student participation information.

⁵ The original program name was the Texas Advanced Placement Spanish Language Middle School Program, which was officially changed in 2006 to comply with guidelines of the College Board, the owner of the trademark “Advanced Placement.”

⁶ A student's home language is usually determined by the home language survey, which is administered at the district level and reported to the state.

⁷ Staff changes at TEA since the program began resulted in limited historical knowledge of the program and lack of access to complete program documentation.

Pilot districts included the following.

- Austin Independent School District
- Brownsville Independent School District
- Irving Independent School District
- McKinney Independent School District
- Tyler Independent School District
- Valley View Independent School District
- Ysleta Independent School District

Grantee districts broadly represented most regions of the state, with the exception of the Panhandle. Grantees also represented a range of community types, sizes, and student populations, from a large, major urban district (Austin) to several mid-sized cities (Brownsville, El Paso, Irving) to small communities such as Pharr, which is the location of Valley View ISD. Student populations at the pilot sites also varied in size and composition. Some participating districts serve students who are primarily Hispanic and economically disadvantaged (Brownsville, Valley View, Ysleta), while other sites have an Hispanic student population that is sizeable among student groups (Austin, Irving, Tyler). Other participating districts have Hispanic subpopulations that are small minority groups representing a quarter or less of the student population (McKinney, Tyler).

Table 1.1. Pilot district profiles (2000–01)

District	Community Type	Total Enrollment	% Hispanic	% Economically Disadvantaged	% Limited English Proficient
Austin	Major urban	77,816	47.8%	48.0%	17.8%
Brownsville	Major suburban	40,898	97.4%	91.9%	44.1%
Irving	Major suburban	29,097	48.8%	55.3%	29.5%
McKinney	Other central city	12,000	19.7%	20.6%	7.2%
Tyler	Other central city	16,626	26.7%	52.5%	14.3%
Valley View	Independent town	2,280	99.9%	94.8%	53.7%
Ysleta	Major suburban	46,394	88.1%	73.4%	22.1%

Source. Texas Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)

Note. Community type categories are defined by the state and are classified on a scale ranging from major urban to rural.

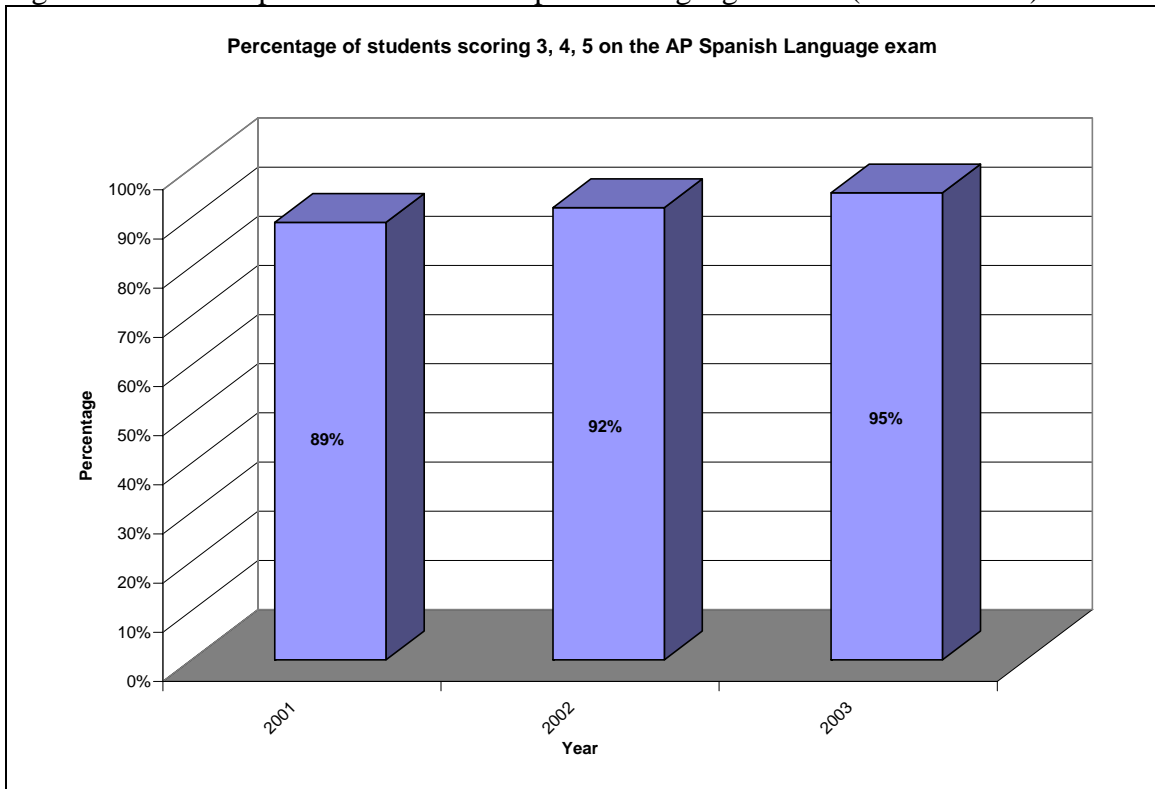
The seven pilot school districts established programs in 17 middle schools. In addition to offering the course, TEA documents indicate that most campuses developed pre-course summer institutes for enrolling students and additional support services such as tutoring, parent engagement strategies, and college awareness activities. Some also implemented

Pre-AP* Spanish programs in sixth and seventh grades for eligible students. Processes for selecting students to participate in the course were locally defined but data collected for this and another evaluation suggest that many districts targeted the highest performing Spanish-speaking students for participation, especially in the first year of implementation.

In the first year of course implementation at the pilot sites, districts reported that 346 eighth-grade students in the pilot schools took the AP Spanish Language examination in May 2001. On the AP exam score scale of 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest, 89% of the eighth-grade students received a score of 3 or above on the exam, making them eligible to receive college credit for the course at most colleges and universities.

In the second year of implementation, districts reported that 416 eighth-graders took the AP Spanish Language examination, and 91.9% received scores of 3 or above. In 2003, districts reported that 94.8% of the 595 participating students received scores of 3 or above.

Figure 1.1. Student performance on AP Spanish Language exams (2001 to 2003)



Source. District-reported data

A program evaluation of the pilot project was conducted by the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University and described implementation models, examination performance, and anecdotal reports from survey data (Public Policy Research Institute, 2002). This information was used by TEA to develop plans for a scale-up of the program.

Scale-Up Program (2002)

In 2002, TEA applied for another grant from the U.S. Department of Education's API program to replicate the middle school AP Spanish program at additional scale-up sites across the state. All Texas school districts received applications, and 65 campuses applied. TEA awarded 13 two-year grants (\$20,000 for a planning year and \$25,000 for the first year of program implementation). Awardee districts, called scale-up districts in this report, were the following.

- Aldine Independent School District
- Canutillo Independent School District
- Comanche Independent School District
- Fabens Independent School District
- Garland Independent School District
- Harlandale Independent School District
- Hidalgo Independent School District
- Houston Independent School District
- Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District
- Northside Independent School District
- Spring Branch Independent School District
- Tyler Independent School District⁸
- Waco Independent School District

As with the pilot program, these districts represented most of the regions of the state, again with no representation from the Panhandle.⁹ As indicated in Table 1.2., scale-up districts represented a range in types and sizes of communities served by participating schools.

As part of the scale-up effort, TEA developed an implementation guide based on information provided by the pilot districts, offered annual summer professional development institutes for program teachers and administrators, and developed a program website. The original seven pilot sites also received small grants to allow key program staff to serve as mentors to the new scale-up sites and to design and participate in professional development for the new grantees.

Again, the grant allowed for broad local decision making in the design and implementation of programs. Grant requirements were that the majority of participating students be economically disadvantaged and that grantees establish procedures to ensure that all students enrolled in the course take the AP exam. Further, a key program component added to the scale-up initiative was the requirement that participating middle schools coordinate their efforts with at least one district high school so that participating students could take the AP Spanish Literature course by 10th grade. This additional requirement was designed to provide some continuity in support for participating students between middle and high school, to facilitate the articulation of middle and high school

⁸ Hogg Middle School in Tyler ISD participated in the pilot program.

⁹ According to TEA staff, few applications were received from this region despite a targeted effort to provide information about the grant opportunity through the state's regional education service centers.

Spanish programs, and to ensure that student focus on advanced courses and program goals were not lost when students moved to high school. Only about half of the scale-up districts complied with this requirement implementing high school AP Spanish Literature courses offered over two years (in Grades 9–10) in at least one high school.¹⁰

Table 1.2. Scale-up district profiles (2003–04)

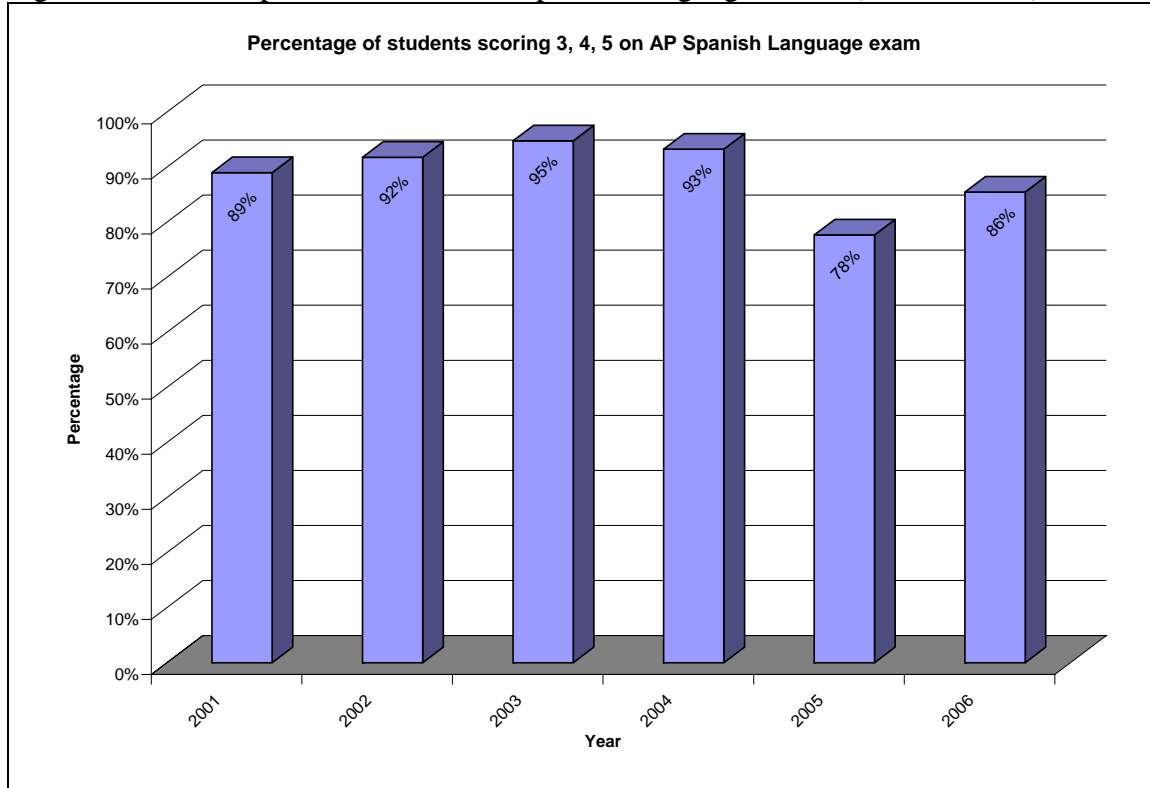
District	Community Type	Total Enrollment	% Hispanic	% Economically Disadvantaged	% Limited English Proficient
Aldine	Major urban	56,127	58.0%	76.6%	24.9%
Canutillo	Independent town	4,820	95.8%	82.7%	40.7%
Comanche	Non-metropolitan stable	1,400	39.3%	56.4%	9.6%
Fabens	Non-metropolitan fast-growing	2,757	97.7%	93.0%	44.6%
Garland	Major urban	54,925	34.9%	40.6%	22.1%
Harlandale	Other central city	14,072	94.8%	89.4%	15.0%
Hidalgo	Independent town	3,156	99.7%	92.2%	54.1%
Houston	Major urban	211,157	58.1%	81.7%	29.0%
Los Fresnos	Other central city suburban	7,506	93.2%	85.5%	26.4%
Northside	Major urban	71,307	58.7%	43.4%	6.1%
Spring Branch	Major suburban	32,920	52.7%	54.1%	30.5%
Tyler	Other central city	17,273	31.6%	55.0%	16.5%
Waco	Other central city	15,591	45.7%	80.8%	11.6%

Source. AEIS

The 13 scale-up grantees offered the eighth-grade AP Spanish Language course for the first time in the 2003–04 school year to 246 students. In 2005, participation at the scale-up sites reached 350, and in 2006, the number of students at the scale-up sites participating in the exam was 380. AP Exam performance of students at both the pilot and scale-up districts is captured in Figure 1.2.

¹⁰ The first group of students from the scale-up sites should have completed the two-year high school AP Spanish Literature course in those districts in which it was offered in 2005–06.

Figure 1.2. Student performance on AP Spanish Language exams (2001 to 2006)



Source. District-reported data

Note. See Chapter 6 for discussion of drop in percentage of students scoring 3, 4, or 5 in 2005.

Evaluation of the scale-up program by the external evaluator was ongoing through December 2006. The focus of this other evaluation was on the collection of program data for the pilot and the scale-up programs as well as the statewide expansion program described in the next section.

Statewide Expansion Program (2005)

In March 2005, TEA administered a planning grant program to seed a statewide expansion of the program. Grants of up to \$10,000 were awarded to 59 sites at either the district or campus level. (See Appendix A for a full list of the 2005 Expansion Program grantees.) TEA sponsored a professional development workshop for grantees at the beginning of the grant to support program planning. Grant requirements stipulated that campuses offer the course to eighth grade students beginning in 2006–07. Limited information about these additional sites was available during the period of the evaluation and is discussed in Chapter 6.

In addition to the high student performance on the AP Spanish Language examination, anecdotal reports from staff at the pilot and scale-up sites suggested that as a result of participation, student absenteeism and disciplinary infractions declined; students' overall grades improved; and upon entering high school, students enrolled in more advanced

classes and performed better on state tests than students from this population typically did. This study was designed to investigate these claims.

The next chapters of this report describe the study approach and methodology and characteristics of participating students. The following chapters report findings associated with the research questions. The final chapter provides a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

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CHAPTER 2—STUDY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

In 2005, the Advanced Academics Unit of the Division of Curriculum at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) contracted with Resources for Learning, LLC (RFL), to conduct an evaluation of the longer term impacts associated with participation by low-income, Spanish-speaking eighth graders in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish.¹¹ In addition to high student performance on the AP Spanish Language examination, anecdotal reports from staff at the pilot and scale-up sites suggested that as a result of participation, student absenteeism and disciplinary infractions declined; students' overall grades improved; and upon entering high school, students enrolled in more advanced classes and performed better on state tests than students from this population typically did. This study was designed to investigate these claims.

Because a primary focus of the study is the long-term outcomes of program participation, analysis focused primarily on the pilot program, which began in 2000.

The purpose of this evaluation was to:

- collect participation statistics;
- identify relationships between program participation for students participating in the program at the pilot campuses and long-term, school-related student outcomes;¹²
- document student perceptions of impacts; and
- provide ongoing statewide program implementation information and statistics related to participation and performance that could inform the future of the program.

Evaluation Questions

1. Did students who participated in the program have higher attendance rates in high school than their non-participant peers?
2. Did students who participated in the program perform better on state tests in high school than their non-participant peers?
3. Did students who participated in the program complete AP courses in high school in higher numbers and at a higher rate than their non-participant peers?
4. How did students who participated in the program perform on AP exams in high school?
5. Did students who participated in the program graduate early or on the Distinguished Achievement Plan at a higher rate than their non-participant peers?
6. Did students who participated in the program feel the program impacted them positively in terms of academics, future opportunities, and relationships?
7. What are some issues that are likely to impact the program in the future?

¹¹RFL served as the external evaluator for TEA's second API grant described in chapter 1. This evaluation included information from interim and annual district progress reports on program planning activities and enrollment and performance data at the scale-up sites for inclusion in TEA reports to the U.S. Department of Education.

¹² It should be noted that discipline-related outcomes were excluded from the evaluation design due to the unreliability and variability of discipline-related data primarily because of inconsistency in reporting by school districts.

Participants

The evaluation focused on data for three cohorts of students at the pilot campuses. For the purpose of this study, a cohort is defined as the group of students who participated in the eighth-grade AP Spanish Language course at the pilot campuses in a given year of the program.

- Cohort 1: Students participating in the 2000–01 AP Spanish Language middle school course (estimated total students=346). These students were scheduled to graduate from high school in May 2005.
- Cohort 2: Students participating in the 2001–02 AP Spanish Language middle school course (estimated total students=416). These students were scheduled to graduate from high school in May 2006.
- Cohort 3: Students participating in the 2002–03 AP Spanish Language middle school course (estimated total students=595). These students were scheduled to graduate in May 2007.

Participant Groups

Participating districts provided identification information on the first three cohorts of students participating in the program in 2000–01, 2001–02, and 2002–03. These data were used to identify participant groups for the study. Not all districts provided identification numbers that could directly identify students in PEIMS and assessment databases and reports. Where possible, these student names and/or local identification numbers were used to match participating students with demographic and outcome data from TEA databases. Of the originally reported cohort, a smaller number of students than actually participated are included in each participant group for analysis purposes (see Table 2.1.). Participant groups included all students with identification numbers, including those who were still in the same district and those who had moved from the district but were still in the state school system and whose data were included in the TEA databases used for any analysis. This means that participants who dropped out of school at some point after completing the eighth-grade course were not included in the study participant groups.

As stated above, participant groups were identified based on the availability of data for analysis. To ensure that the participant group used for analysis was representative of the original cohort group in terms of scores on the AP Spanish Language exam, scores were compared for the entire cohort and the subset of identified students in the participant group. The comparison showed that the scores for the subset of identified students were representative of the scores of the entire cohort. For example, the percentage of the entire cohort that received a 3, 4, or 5 on the exam in 2000–01 was 89% compared to 88% for the identified participant group. Similarly, in 2001–02, districts reported that 92% of the second-year cohort received a score of 3, 4, or 5 compared to 91% of the identified participant group. In the third year, the percentages between the two groups were also within one percentage point of each other.

Table 2.1. Comparison of AP exam scores between cohort and participant groups

Year	Group	% scoring 1	% scoring 2	% scoring 3	% scoring 4	% scoring 5	% scoring 3,4,5
1	Cohort N=346	3	8	20	40	29	89
	Participant N=267	3	9	20	40	27	88
2	Cohort N=416	1	7	22	40	30	92
	Participant N=299	2	7	24	39	28	91
3	Cohort N=595	.01	4	19	36	40	95
	Participant N=554	1	5	21	37	36	94

Source. District-reported data

Note. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

For the remainder of this report, the term “participant group” is used to describe the groups of students included in the analysis.

Peer Groups

The study also included peer groups composed of all other Hispanic, Spanish-speaking students at the same campuses in seventh grade who did not participate in the program and who had a TAAS or TAKS score in Grade 7. As will be seen in chapter 4, this allowed evaluators to compare the outcomes for participant students to school averages for the group of students at the same campuses who were very similar demographically to participating students. Peer groups were used for comparative purposes in describing participant characteristics as well as for analysis of AP course taking and graduation data. Smaller similarly sized comparison groups were randomly selected from the peer groups and used for analysis of those impact areas for which a test of statistical significance was relevant, such as attendance and performance on state tests in high school; therefore, a prior-to-participation value was available to use as a statistical control. These subset groups were used for comparison of attendance rates and state assessment scores in high school adjusted for seventh-grade rates or scores when examining high school differences. Matching of students for a control group was not possible because not enough students from the peer groups had equivalent seventh-grade scores on TAAS, indicating that districts chose the highest performing students for participation in the course. Thus, regression analyses controlling for prior performance were run comparing participant and a similarly sized subset of the peer group for those study areas for which there was a prior-to-participation score.

Table 2.2. Numbers of students in participant, peer, and subset groups used for regression analysis

Year	Number of students in participant group	Number of students in peer group	Number of students in subset of peer group
1	267	2,010	300
2	299	2,278	355
3	554	2,153	500

Evaluation Scope and Period of Analysis

This evaluation focuses on student data from the 1999–2000 academic year through 2004–05 using the latest available data from districts and TEA. Some program participation and performance data provided by districts for 2004–05 is included in the discussion of the future of the program in chapter 6. Some projections about 2006–07 activities and program statistics are provided from district reports but are based on best available information and should be considered as predictions only.

Methods

Data collection methods included requests for student identification and AP exam performance information from pilot districts. Participating student attendance and performance data were collected from the appropriate divisions at TEA. Surveys were administered at pilot campuses by local coordinators, and the evaluators conducted a document review of program information. Pilot districts received compensation for provision of requested data. Compensation was based on a per-student basis. Not all pilot districts provided all data requested (as indicated within relevant chapters) and, thus, not all districts were compensated. Data on student performance on the AP Spanish Language exam were collected from both the pilot districts and the scale-up districts, and College Board score distribution reports were provided by TEA.

Student Data

Data Sources and Collection

A portion of the evaluation used student identification information provided by districts. Based on the student identification information provided, the evaluators requested student performance data on the student assessment required by the State of Texas during the years of the study. Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) data for the years 1999–2002 and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) data for subsequent years were requested from the Student Assessment Division of TEA. Data on student characteristics, attendance, course taking, and graduation were requested from the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Division of TEA.

Data collected on identified students from TEA (and districts as appropriate) were the latest available data (through Spring 2005) and included the following:

Cohort 1:

- TAAS data for 1999–2000 (the year prior to enrollment), 2000–01, and 2001–02
- TAKS data through Spring 2005
- High school attendance data through Spring 2005
- High school course completion data through Spring 2005
- Graduation data through Spring 2005 including Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) and Recommended High School Program (RHSP) data
- AP examination scores for all AP courses completed in high school
- PEIMS demographic data

Cohort 2:

- TAAS data for 2000–01 (the year prior to enrollment) and 2001–02
- TAKS data through Spring 2005
- High school attendance data through Spring 2005
- High school course completion through Spring 2005
- Graduation data through Spring 2005 including DAP and RHSP data
- AP examination scores for all AP courses completed in high school
- PEIMS demographic data

Cohort 3:

- TAAS data for 2001–02
- TAKS data through Spring 2005
- PEIMS demographic data

To collect data on AP examination scores for all completed AP courses in high school for Participant Groups 1 and 2, the evaluators provided district program coordinators with AP course completion spreadsheets based on PEIMS course completion data.

To identify and analyze performance of peer groups, the evaluators also collected from TEA:

- TAAS and TAKS data for 1999–2000 through Spring 2005 for Hispanic students
- Attendance data through Spring 2005 for Hispanic students
- Course completion data through Spring 2005 for Hispanic students
- Graduation data through Spring 2005 for Hispanic students including DAP and RHSP data
- PEIMS demographic data for Hispanic students

Analysis

For the analysis of participating student characteristics and long-term outcomes data (attendance, TAKS performance, AP course taking, and graduation), participant groups were compared to peer groups comprised of the school average for Hispanic students whose home language was Spanish. In those outcome areas for which a test of statistical significance was appropriate, i.e., where a prior-year value (attendance, TAKS performance) was available, additional comparisons were conducted with similarly sized subsets of the peer groups so that the difference in group size did not affect the results of

the statistical testing. Regression analyses adjusted for previous performance in these areas.

Characteristics. Participant groups were compared to peer groups and findings were reported with descriptive statistics.

Attendance. Descriptive statistics of comparisons between participant and peer groups were reported. Regression analyses were then conducted for each participant group, calculating differences between the participant and a similarly sized subset of the peer group in attendance in Grade 11 (Participant Groups 1 and 2) or Grade 12 (Participant Group 1) after adjusting for seventh-grade attendance rates.

TAKS performance. Student performance on statewide examinations was analyzed for Participant Groups 1, 2, and 3 compared to performance of peers and reported with descriptive statistics.

Regression analysis comparing performance of the participants to similarly sized subsets of the peer groups was then performed separately for scores in mathematics and reading/English language arts on state tests. For students in Participant Groups 1 and 2 the initial assessment (Grade 7) was TAAS and the final high school assessment was TAKS. In all cases, when looking for differences between the groups on the high school assessment, the scores were adjusted for the students' seventh-grade assessment scores. This was appropriate to address issues of selection bias related to identification of students by schools for enrollment in the course. In other words, if only students who performed well on seventh-grade TAAS were selected for participation in the course, then comparison with others who had not previously performed as well would be inappropriate. Thus, comparisons made between the participants and a subset of the peer group were adjusted statistically for prior performance on the statewide assessment. However, it should be noted that some students in each group (participant and peer) did not have a TAAS score in mathematics and/or reading/English language arts in seventh grade due to exemptions from participation in state exam related to their LEP status.

Comparison with the subset of the peer group was done with a regression equation. The regression equation allowed researchers to adjust for differences in the students' test scores the year before the program and then determine if there were differences between the groups on their high school test scores. To accomplish this, test scores in the year before the program and group membership were used to predict test scores in the high school year. For each participant group, test score differences are reported for the last year in which high school testing data were available. Results were then reported with a "p-value" which identifies the statistical likelihood that the same results—in this case, differences between the participant and the peer group on their final assessment scores—could have been obtained by chance. For purposes of this evaluation, a p-value of .05 or less is considered statistically significant, indicating that the results discussed almost certainly could not have occurred by chance.

It should be noted that the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) was administered to students in Grades 3–8 and 10th grade (exit level) through 2002. Beginning in 2003, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) was administered to students in Grades 3–11 (exit level). For all participant groups, data from the years through 2002 are TAAS results; data from 2003 and after are TAKS results. These are two different examinations, and scoring is reported on different scales. Scores on the TAAS test were reported on a scale of 1 to 100, whereas scores on the TAKS are reported on a scale of 1000 to 3200, according to TEA.¹³ Because of the differences in the scales used to report TAAS scores and TAKS scores, it is not possible to compare differences between the groups by subtracting the average score in seventh grade from the average score in 10th or 11th grade. However, it is possible to compare differences in average score using a regression equation which predicts a high school TAKS score using the seventh-grade TAAS score.

For purposes of using a regression equation, raw scores on the TAKS test are analyzed rather than scale scores. This is because the raw scores are closer in scale to those of the earlier TAAS test, and no attempt is being made to convert those raw scores to a passing standard, which would require the use of the scale score.

AP course taking and AP examination performance in high school. Data on completion of AP courses in high school for all participant groups were compared with peer group completion rates, and results were reported with descriptive statistics. In addition, scores on AP exams taken in high school as reported by districts for Participant Groups 1 and 2 were summarized.

Graduation. Participant groups were compared with peer groups, and results were reported with descriptive statistics.

Please note: Most of the student identification numbers, as well as exam participation and performance data, used for this portion of the evaluation were collected as part of the ongoing external evaluation associated with the API scale-up grant and were not collected separately for this evaluation. However, as a function of this evaluation effort, some districts were asked to provide clarification on previously supplied data in cases where they were incomplete. As noted above, not all districts provided student identification information that could be matched with state databases.

Surveys

Surveys were used to assess student perceptions of program impacts, including perceived changes in academic performance, relationships at school, college expectations and aspirations, and plans for the future.

Survey Instrument

Student surveys included items extracted from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) and the National Education Longitudinal Study

¹³ *Texas Student Assessment Program Technical Digest for the Academic Year 2002–2003.* Available at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/techdig/index.html>.

(NELS).¹⁴ Survey questions selected from these instruments were primarily related to academics and future plans. Questions related specifically to student perceptions of impacts of participation in the program were added. (See Appendix B, Participant Survey.)

Data Sources and Data Collection

Through PEIMS data received from TEA, the evaluators identified students in Participant Group 2 (original cohort=416) who were still enrolled in the district and attending high school, and the evaluators worked with a local program coordinator at each of the pilot sites to administer a survey in Winter/Spring 2006.¹⁵ The evaluators distributed materials to program coordinators in Fall 2005 for local survey administration and provided paper surveys, instructions, consent forms for parents and students, and a confidential spreadsheet that provided: 1) names of identified students in Participant Group 2 who were still enrolled in the district; and 2) the high schools they attended. District program coordinators worked with staff at the individual high schools that students were attending at the time to distribute information, obtain parental consent, and administer the survey.

Of the original district-reported program participation of 416 students in the second year the program was offered, a total of 230 students for whom the district had provided identification information were identified as still attending school in the same district.¹⁶ Surveys were sent to districts, and 111 surveys were returned for a response rate of 48%. One district did not return surveys. District program coordinators were either middle school or district-level personnel, and several districts reported difficulty locating students that attended any one of a number of district high schools. This was complicated by the fact that the process involved two rounds of contacting students through various means: first, to distribute information about the survey and parental consent forms; and then, to collect consent forms and administer the survey. Minor students who did not return a parental consent form were not allowed to take the survey. According to program coordinators, this requirement contributed to the low response rates in some districts as some students forgot to return the signed forms.

It is important to note the sample of students surveyed was not selected using a probability sampling method. It is a convenience sample or a sample chosen based on the availability of being able to locate program participants. Because the sample was selected using a non-probability method, it cannot be inferred that the survey findings presented in

¹⁴ The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) is a representative study that explores the causes of health-related behaviors of adolescents in grades 7 through 12 and their outcomes in young adulthood. Add Health seeks to examine how social contexts (families, friends, peers, schools, neighborhoods, and communities) influence adolescents' health and risk behaviors. For more information, see <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/addhealth>. The National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 88) is a major longitudinal effort by the National Center for Education Statistics designed to provide trend data about critical transitions experienced by students as they leave middle or junior high school and progress through high school and into postsecondary institutions or the work force. For more information, see <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/nels88/>.

¹⁵ Participant Group 1 was not included in this component of the study as students in this group had already graduated by the time the study was initiated.

¹⁶ It was beyond the scope of the evaluation to compare information on students who stayed in the district and those who moved to other districts within the state during high school.

chapter 5 are entirely representative of Participant Group 2, of all the program participants, or of the larger Hispanic, Spanish-speaking student population.

Table 2.3. Survey responses

Number of students in Participant Group 2	Number of students identified as still in district (Surveys sent)	Number of respondents	% return
416	230	111	48.26

Source. District-reported data

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze survey data.

Program Data

This portion of the evaluation included historical, district-reported program participation and exam performance information from both the pilot and scale-up sites and College Board score distribution reports provided by TEA. Limited information on the 59 expansion sites receiving 2005 planning grants also was included from review of grantee progress reports. Additional information on AP Spanish Language examinations was collected from the College Board website.

Data Sources and Data Collection

The evaluators collected the following information from districts.

- Historical AP Spanish Language exam participation and score data for 2004–05 (pilot and scale-up sites)
- Projected enrollments for 2006–07 (2005 planning grant sites)

Information about changes to the AP Spanish Language examination in 2005 and 2007 was collected from the College Board website. Exam performance data for 2006 was collected from the College Board Score Distribution Report for Texas, which provides exam performance by school.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to report information on program participation and examination performance data. Document review of progress reports from 2005 expansion sites were used in the development of projections for 2006–07 enrollment.

Limitations

- The purpose of this evaluation was to investigate some of the long-term student outcomes associated with participation in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish. Because the evaluation began in 2005 and the program was initiated in 2000, student participation data was collected retroactively for the first three groups of students who participated in the program. It should be noted that in some cases district-reported data was irregular and/or inconsistent. Adjustments and strategies

used to compensate for data irregularities are described earlier in this chapter. Further, little is known about the initial grant awards and requirements or local program development and decision-making processes. Thus, the focus of this evaluation is limited to investigation of possible long-term outcomes to the extent possible. In other words, this investigation does not benefit from complete participant data or information about local circumstances at the time of participation that can be linked to individual students including local context, selection processes for student participation, or differentiation in services provided. Because all of these factors could have influenced the long-term outcomes, it is important to recognize that the evaluation describes trends overall that are likely attributable to program participation but that are subject to considerable variation at the local level.

- The evaluation methodology was designed to control for prior performance issues that could have influenced long-term school related outcomes for participants. However, other factors could have come into play, the identification and measurement of which were beyond the scope of the evaluation.
- Analysis of characteristics of participating students indicated that participating districts were selective in identifying students for participation in the program in the first year of implementation by selecting more students who were not identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) or LEP exempt and who had previously performed better than their peers on state examinations from the larger pool of eligible students (low-income, Spanish-speaking). This group (Participant Group 1) is the only group for which complete data on course taking and graduation through Grade 12 was available. Most findings for Participant Group 1 were substantiated by analysis of student data for students who participated in the second year of the program (Participant Group 2). While Participant Group 2 was more representative of the target group (low-income, Spanish-speaking students), data was only available through 11th grade, so findings should be read with these circumstances in mind.
- The number of students for whom scores were reported on the AP Spanish Language exam in eighth grade is the number used to determine annual program participation. While original course enrollment figures from each district were requested, irregular reporting of the number of students enrolled (and frequent omissions of students who dropped the course) guided the decision to use the number of students taking and receiving scores on the AP examination as the number in the cohort. Because of the tendency for students to take AP courses but not participate in the exam, a condition of the TEA grant was to require students who took the AP Spanish Language course to participate in the examination. Thus, the evaluators believe the cohort figures used are relatively close to the actual enrollments in the course. Throughout this report, discussions about program participation use figures determined from exam performance data.
- Survey results, as noted above and in the chapter on survey findings (chapter 5), need to be read with care as results could be biased due to student mobility and willingness

to respond to the survey. Selecting a probability sample was beyond the scope of the evaluation.

- In all cases, analysis of outcomes was based on students for whom data was available through graduation for Participant Group 1 and through 11th grade for Participant Group 2. Students dropping out in Grade 9 or 10 were not included in the analysis of final TAKS scores or graduation type, for instance. Only students who stayed in school and participated in TAKS testing had final outcomes available for analysis.

Terminology

TEA records indicated that participation in the program has been 100% Hispanic and because this is the term used in state databases, this is the term used in this report to describe the ethnicity of participating students. In addition, because some participating students were identified at the time of program participation (locally and in state records) as Limited English Proficient (LEP), this term is also used in this report to specifically describe characteristics of participating students as indicated in state data. Further information on definitions is provided in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 3—CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

The evaluation included analysis of the characteristics of participating students to determine who participated in the program and how representative these students were of their peers. This information is important for the subsequent analysis of long-term, school-related outcomes discussed in chapter 4.

In describing the characteristics of participating students, the makeup of participant groups was compared to peer groups in terms of economic status to provide the percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged. For purposes of this evaluation, students were considered economically disadvantaged if they were identified as such in the TEA PEIMS dataset.¹⁷

Characteristics of participating students also were analyzed in terms of percentage identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) in seventh grade in the TEA PEIMS dataset. A student identified as “Limited English Proficient,” according to Texas Education Code (§ 29.052), is “a student whose primary language is other than English and whose English language skills are such that the student has difficulty performing ordinary classwork in English.” These students are identified for enrollment in bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs unless their parents refuse such services. District language proficiency assessment committees annually review data, such as home language surveys and English language proficiency assessments, to determine the language proficiency status of students. When LEP students pass the reading/English language arts section of the TAKS examination, they are no longer identified as LEP in state databases, and they exit bilingual or ESL programs.

The percentage of students in participant and peer groups identified as LEP-exempt from state assessments is also included. LEP exemptions were included in data collected from the TEA Student Assessment Division. According to Texas Administrative Code “certain immigrant LEP students who have had inadequate schooling outside the U.S. may be eligible for an exemption from the assessment of academic skills during a period not to exceed their first three school years of enrollment in U.S. schools.” The term “immigrant” is defined as “a student who has resided outside the 50 U.S. states for at least two consecutive years.”¹⁸ Thus, some LEP students who are recent immigrants are not required to take state examinations.

In addition, average Grade 7 scores on statewide examinations (TAAS or TAKS) were compared with averages for the peer groups to determine characteristics of participating students in terms of prior performance on state assessments. Gender was also analyzed and distributions of male and female participants were compared to peer groups for each year included in the analysis.

¹⁷ Students identified as economically disadvantaged are those eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program.

¹⁸ Commissioner's Rules Concerning the Participation of Limited English Proficient Students in State Assessments, Texas Administrative Code §101.1007.

Economic Status

Districts receiving TEA grants to pilot the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish were required to target economically disadvantaged students for participation in the program. Not all participants in the program, however, were low income.

The percentage of students in the participant groups that were identified as economically disadvantaged was compared to peer groups for each of the first three years of the program (Participant Groups 1, 2, and 3). Of Participant Group 1, 93% were economically disadvantaged compared to 95% of their peers. Students participating in the program in the second year of the program (Participant Group 2) were more similar to their peers than Participant Group 1 students in terms of economic status—95% of participants and 95% of the peer group were identified as economically disadvantaged. In the third year of the program, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students in Participant Group 3 dropped slightly to 90%, compared to 93% of economically disadvantaged students in the peer group.

Table 3.1. Economic status of participating students compared to peers

Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Participant	93%	95%	90%
Peer	95%	95%	93%

Source. TEA PEIMS

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Status

LEP Identification

The percentage of participating students identified as Limited English Proficient (LEP) also was calculated for each group. In Participant Groups 2 and 3, students were more similar to their peers than in Participant Group 1 in percentage of students identified in the PEIMS database as LEP. In the first year of the program (2000–01), 32% of participating students were LEP compared to 45% of their peers. In the next two years of the program, however, participants more closely reflected the peer groups in percentages of students identified as LEP. This data suggests a degree of selectivity in choosing students for participation in the first year of program implementation which might affect the comparison between groups.

Table 3.2. LEP status of participating students compared to peers

Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Participant	32%	38%	35%
Peer	45%	39%	37%

Source. TEA PEIMS

LEP Exemptions

The percentage of participating students receiving an exemption from participation in the state examination due to LEP status in the seventh grade also was calculated. For the initial program year, the percentage of participants who were eligible for a LEP

exemption—i.e., had been in the U.S. for three or fewer years and had previously received inadequate schooling—was approximately representative of Hispanic, Spanish-speaking students at the participating campuses. In the second and third program years, increasing numbers of new immigrant students participated.

Table 3.3. Participants and peers identified for LEP exemptions on state examination

Group	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Participant	8%	18%	20%
Peer	9%	11%	10%

Source. TEA Student Assessment Division

Prior Performance on State Tests

Average Grade 7 scores on statewide examinations were compared with peer group averages for all participant groups. These prior scores were then used to statistically adjust for different initial performance among students when comparing statewide examination scores in high school for the participants and the subset of peers. Differences between the initial scores for participants and the subset of peers will be discussed in chapter 4. Because students in either group identified as LEP-exempt did not take state assessments in seventh grade, they were not included in the regression analysis.

Participant Group 1’s prior-year test scores were 14 points higher in reading and 12 points higher in mathematics than average scores for the peer group. During the second and third years of the program, participants were more similar, though still slightly higher performing, than their peers. The average of seventh-grade scores for Participant Groups 2 and 3 was only four points higher in reading and two points higher in mathematics. Prior performance for all participant and peer groups was below state averages for both reading and mathematics.

Table 3.4. Prior-year test scores

Group	Year 1 Grade 7 Average Scores (2000)		Year 2 Grade 7 Average Scores (2001)		Year 3 Grade 7 Average Scores (2002)	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
Participant	76	76	73	72	72	71
Peer	62	64	69	70	68	69
State Average	83.5	88.1	89.4	89.6	91.3	92.2

Source. TEA Student Assessment Division

Gender

Districts tended to select a disproportionate number of females for participation in the program compared to the peer groups. Over the first three years of the program, more females than males were selected for program participation. In fact, the proportion of

females selected for program participation increased each year, with a commensurate decrease in the proportion of male participants. For the peer groups, the proportion of males (52%) and females (48%) in the Hispanic, Spanish-speaking population stayed the same.

Table 3.5. Gender of participating students compared to peers

Group	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Participant	41%	59%	40%	60%	35%	65%
Peer	52%	48%	52%	48%	52%	48%

Source. TEA PEIMS

Overall, analysis of characteristics of participating students suggested a high degree of selectivity in identifying students for participation in the pilot year of the program. Although the evaluation was not informed by local selection criteria for participation, in year 1, schools and districts tended to select students who were not identified as LEP and who, compared to their Hispanic, Spanish-speaking peers, were higher performing on state tests. In years 2 and 3, however, selection appeared to be more representative. Across all years analyzed, a disproportionate number of females were selected for participation over males.

CHAPTER 4—RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROGRAM PARTICIPATION AND LONG-TERM, SCHOOL-RELATED STUDENT OUTCOMES

Evaluation Questions:

- Did students who participated in the program have higher attendance rates in high school than their non-participant peers?
- Did students who participated in the program perform better on state tests in high school than their non-participant peers?
- Did students who participated in the program complete AP courses in high school in higher numbers and at a higher rate than their non-participant peers?
- How did students who participated in the program perform on AP exams in high school?
- Did students who participated in the program graduate early or on the Distinguished Achievement Plan at a higher rate than their non-participant peers?

In this chapter, students in Participant Groups 1, 2, and 3—those who participated in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish in 2000–01, 2001–02, and 2002–03—are compared to their Hispanic, Spanish-speaking peers¹⁹ in the same schools across a range of impact areas aligned with the evaluation questions. These areas of focus included attendance, TAKS performance, AP courses taken in high school, and graduation data. Peer groups were used for comparison on AP courses taken in high school, AP exam performance, and graduation patterns. In those outcome areas for which a test of statistical significance was appropriate, i.e., where a prior-year value (attendance, TAKS performance) was available, additional comparisons were conducted with similarly sized subsets of the peer groups so that the difference in group size did not affect the results of the statistical testing. Regression analyses adjusted for previous performance in these areas.

Attendance

This section provides findings from analysis of high school attendance rates for participating students as compared to peer groups for Participant Groups 1 and 2.

Staff in participating districts reported anecdotally that student attendance improved as a result of participation in the program. However, analysis showed that attendance rates of the participant students across Participant Groups 1 and 2²⁰ did not differ statistically or practically from the average student attendance in the peer groups in either eighth grade or in high school. Further, high school attendance for the participant group did not differ statistically from the average attendance of a randomly selected, similarly sized control group of peer students. Attendance rates for both participant and peer groups were at or slightly above the state average in Grade 8 but decreased over time throughout high school.

¹⁹ Students who, according to home language survey data in the PEIMS database, reported Spanish as the language spoken at home.

²⁰ Analysis of Participant Group 3 attendance data was not conducted after ascertaining there were no impacts in this area for Participant Groups 1 and 2.

Table 4.1. High school attendance rates of participant, peer, and subset groups compared to state averages

Participant Group 1					
	Grade 8 (2001)	Grade 9 (2002)	Grade 10 (2003)	Grade 11 (2004)	Grade 12 (2005)
Participant	97%	95%	94%	93%	91%
Peer	95%	94%	92%	91%	91%
Similarly sized subset	96%	94%	92%	92%	92%
State Average	95.5%	95.6%	95.6%	95.7%	95.7%
Participant Group 2					
	Grade 8 (2002)	Grade 9 (2003)	Grade 10 (2004)	Grade 11 (2005)	Grade 12 (2006)*
Participant	97%	95%	94%	93%	N/A
Peer	96%	94%	93%	92%	N/A
Similarly sized subset	96%	95%	93%	93%	N/A
State Average	95.6%	95.6%	95.7%	95.7%	N/A

Source. TEA PEIMS

*Grade 12 attendance data (2006) was not available for Participant Group 2 at the time of the study.

Performance on State Tests

This section looks at performance on state assessments. TAAS (where applicable) and TAKS data in mathematics and reading were used for Participant Groups 1, 2, and 3 and compared with peer groups.

Average Grade 7 scores on statewide examinations were compared with overall peer group averages for all participant groups. Prior scores for the similarly sized peer group were then used to statistically adjust for previous performance on the state examination among students when statistically comparing statewide examination scores in high school. Again, students identified as LEP-exempt did not take state assessments in Grade 7 and were not included in the regression analysis.

Because of the differences in the scales used to report TAAS scores and TAKS scores, it is not possible to compare differences between the groups by subtracting the average score in seventh grade from the average score in 10th or 11th grade. However, it is possible to compare differences in the average score using a regression equation which predicts high school TAKS scores using seventh-grade TAAS scores.

Participant Group 1

Participant Group 1 was required to take the state exam through Grade 11. The year that Participant Group 1 was in 10th grade (2003) was the last year for which large numbers of student scores were available.²¹ Participant performance on tests was first compared to

²¹ After discussion with TEA staff, no explanation was found for this fact.

the overall peer group. Of the 267 students in the participant group, 226 students had scores in seventh grade—the year prior to program participation. Their average score was 76, whereas the peer group had an average mathematics score of 65. Averages on the reading/English language arts test in seventh grade were 77 for the participant group and 62 for the peer group. Differences in Grade 10 performance on state tests between Participant Group 1 and its similarly sized subset of peers were not statistically significant for either mathematics or reading/English language arts.

Table 4.2. Participant Group 1 TAAS/TAKS performance in Grade 7 (prior to program participation) and grade 10

Grade	Year	Math*			Reading*		
		AP	Peer	Similarly sized subset	AP	Peer	Similarly sized subset
7	2000	76	65	63	77	62	61
10	2003	32	30	30	42	39	40

Source. TEA Student Assessment

*Because the two tests were scored on different scales, TLI²² was used for TAAS scores (2000); raw scores were used for TAKS (2003). Average scores cannot be compared across years because of differences in the scales used to report scores.

Participant Group 2

Participant Group 2 was required to take the state exam each year through Grade 11. Of the 317 students in Participant Group 2, a total of 278 students had scores. This group had an average mathematics test score of 72 in seventh grade, whereas the overall peer group had an average mathematics score of 70. The participant group students had an average reading score of 73, and the peers scored an average of 69. A randomly selected subset of 355 peers showed a statistically significant difference from the participant group ($p=0.02$) on reading/English language arts raw scores on the TAKS test in Grade 11. For mathematics, differences between participants and the randomly-selected peer group were not statistically significant in Grade 11.

Table 4.3. Participant Group 2 TAAS/TAKS performance in Grade 7 (prior to program participation) and grade 11

Grade	Year	Math*			Reading*		
		AP	Peer	Control	AP	Peer	Control
7	2001	72	70	69	73	69	67
11	2005	39	37	38	42	41	41

Source. TEA Student Assessment

*Because the two tests were scored on different scales, TLI was used for TAAS scores (2001); raw scores were used for TAKS (2005). Average scores cannot be compared across years because of differences in the scales used to report scores.

Participant Group 3

Data was available through 10th grade for Participant Group 3. Of the 554 students in Participant Group 3, 466 students had an average mathematics score in Grade 7 of 71

²² Texas Learning Index (TLI) is the scale score used to report TAAS scores and ranges from 1 to 100.

compared to an average of 69 for their peers. In reading, the participant group average was 72 compared to the peer group average of 68. Grade 10 performance differences between the participant group and a randomly selected, similarly sized subset of the peer group were statistically significant for mathematics and reading/English Language Arts. Two years after being enrolled in the AP Spanish course, students performed at a higher rate in both mathematics and reading. In both cases, the differences between the participant group and the randomly selected peer group subset were highly statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 4.4. Participant Group 3 TAAS/TAKS performance in Grade 7 (prior to program participation) and Grade 10

Grade	Year	Math*			Reading*		
		Participant	Peer	Similarly sized subset	Participant	Peer	Similarly sized subset
7	2002	71	69	67	72	68	67
11	2005	35	33	33	41	40	40

Source. TEA Student Assessment

*Because the two tests were scored on different scales, TLI was used for TAAS scores (2002); raw scores were used for TAKS (2005). Average scores cannot be compared across years because of differences in the scales used to report scores.

AP Course Taking

This section provides findings from analysis of high school AP course-taking patterns. This section also includes findings from limited data on student performance on AP exams taken in high school.

Records of course completion from the PEIMS dataset were used to analyze course-taking data for students in high school. Course-completion data were analyzed for Participant Groups 1 and 2 and compared to peer groups to determine differences in AP course taking in high school.²³

Courses included in the analysis were AP courses. It should be noted that the latest data available during the period of analysis included course completion data through 12th grade for Participant Group 1 and through 11th grade for Participant Group 2. Comparisons included: the percentage of students taking at least one AP course in high school and the number of AP courses taken in Grades 10, 11, and 12; and the percentage of students taking AP English Language and Composition in high school.

Number of AP Courses Taken

Course-taking data was analyzed to show the percentage of students in both Participant Groups 1 and 2 taking at least one AP course in high school and the percentage taking

²³ Participant Group 3 was not included in this portion of the study as students in this group were only in the 10th grade during the period of analysis, and typically, though not always, students take most of their AP courses in 11th and 12th grades.

one, two, and three AP courses in Grades 10, 11, and 12. Grade 12 data were available for Participant Group 1 only.

Overall, across the high school grades, a higher percentage of students in Participant Groups 1 and 2 took at least one AP course in high school compared to their peers. Specifically, 51% of students in Participant Group 1 took at least one AP class in high school, compared to 13% of their peers. By 11th grade, 46% of Participant Group 2 students had taken at least one AP class, while 17% of their peers had taken at least one.

In 10th grade, for Participant Group 1, 8% of students took an AP course in Grade 10, compared to 2% of their peers. Nine percent of Participant Group 2 students took at least one AP course in Grade 10, compared to 2% of their peers.

In 11th grade, 21% of Participant Group 1 students took an AP course, compared to 9% of their peers. Twenty-six percent of Participant Group 2 students took at least one AP course 11th grade, compared to 16% of their peers. The percentage of Participant Group 1 students taking two AP courses in 11th grade was only 13%, but was still higher than the percentage of peer group students (4%). Only 3% of Participant Group 1 students took three AP courses in Grade 11, compared to 1% of their peers. One student in the peer group took four AP courses in 11th grade.

Compared to Participant Group 1, a slightly higher percentage of students in Participant Group 2 and its peer group took one, two, and three AP courses in 11th grade. In 11th grade, 26% of Participant Group 2 students took one AP course, compared to 16% of their peers. The percentage of Participant Group 2 students taking two AP courses in 11th grade was 16%, which was higher than the percentage of peer group students (9%). Only 3% of Participant Group 2 students took three AP courses in Grade 11, compared to 2% of the peer group. One Participant Group 2 student and five peer group students took four AP courses in 11th grade.

Grade 12 course-taking data was only available for Participant Group 1. In Grade 12, 16% of these students took one AP class, compared to 7% of their peers. Also, more Participant Group 1 students (5%) took two or more AP classes than their peers (2%).

Table 4.5. AP courses taken in high school

	Grade 10	Grade 11			Grade 12	
Group 1						
	1 course	1 course	2 courses	3 courses	1 course	2 courses
Participant	8%	21%	13%	3%	16%	5%
Peer	2%	9%	4%	1%	7%	2%
Group 2						
Participant	9%	26%	16%	3%	n/a	n/a
Peer	2%	16%	9%	2%	n/a	n/a

Source. TEA PEIMS

AP English Language and Composition

Participating students in both Participant Groups 1 and 2 began taking AP English Language and Composition in 10th grade. Overall in all grades analyzed (Grades 10–12), 14% of Participant Group 1 and 17% of Participant Group 2 students (Grades 10–11) took the AP English Language and Composition course in high school. Overall, only 5% of the Peer Group 1 and 9% of the Peer Group 2 took the AP English Language course in high school.

Table 4.6. Percentage of students taking AP English Language and Composition

Group	% students taking AP English Language and Composition
Year 1	
Participant	14%
Peer	5%
Year 2	
Participant	17%
Peer	9%

Source. TEA PEIMS

Most Frequently Taken AP Courses in High School

Because of the larger percentages of participant group students taking AP courses in high school, evaluators were interested in which courses they took. Course completion data showed that English Language and Composition was the AP course most frequently taken by participating students in high school, followed by U.S. History. AP Spanish Literature and Composition was the third most frequently taken course by participating students. Most students who completed the AP Spanish Literature and Composition course did so in ninth or 10th grade.

Table 4.7. Most frequently taken AP courses

Course	Number taking course		
	Participant Group 1 (Grades 9–12)	Participant Group 2 (Grades 9–11)	TOTAL
English Language and Composition	56	52	108
U.S. History	43	59	102
Spanish Literature and Composition	40	35	75
English Literature and Composition	33	21	54
Calculus AB	20	4	24

Source. TEA PEIMS

Performance on AP Exams in High School

Districts were supplied with spreadsheets of AP course completion data for participating students (Participant Groups 1 and 2) and asked to provide scores on AP exams.²⁴ Not all districts provided the requested data, and the data that was reported, in some cases, was inconsistent or otherwise contained some anomaly or confusing information. Because of this incomplete and erratic reporting, the limited findings reported here should be interpreted with extreme caution. However, this data is included because it could be indicative of participating students' level of preparedness for advanced courses in high school (and for college) and the need for additional academic support in high school in other subject areas.

Based on the district-reported data AP courses for which students most often took exams were the following.

- English Language and Composition
- U.S. History
- Spanish Literature and Composition
- English Literature and Composition
- Calculus AB

Typically, students scoring a 3, 4, or 5 on an AP exam are eligible for credit at most colleges and universities. (While some institutions give credit for scores of 2, it is not common.) With the exception of AP Spanish Literature and Composition, the majority of students for whom scores were reported received scores of 1 or 2 on the AP examinations they took. Only 8-10% of reported scores were 3 or above. In terms of performance on the AP English Language and Composition exams, out of 67 reported scores, only five students (8%) received a score of 3 or above. In U.S. History only four of the 50 students (8%) for whom scores were reported would be eligible for credit at most colleges and universities.

Though fewer students took AP Spanish Literature, exam performance was better. Twenty-two of the 49 students (45%) for whom scores were reported received scores of 3, 4, and 5.

²⁴ Because it was beyond the scope of the evaluation, AP exam scores were not requested for peer groups.

Table 4.8. Reported scores on most frequently taken AP exams by participants in high school

AP Course	Number of students completing course/Number of students with reported scores	Exam score					Of reported scores, % scoring 3, 4, 5
		5	4	3	2	1	
English Language and Composition	108/67	0	0	5	30	32	8
U.S. History	102/50	0	2	2	4	42	8
AP Spanish Literature and Composition	75/49	2	4	16	7	20	45
English Literature and Composition	54/30	0	0	3	13	14	10
Calculus AB	24/18	0	1	0	1	16	12

Source. District-reported data

Graduation

This section describes graduation-related information on participants in terms of early graduation and participation in the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP).

The evaluation compared participant and peer group students in terms of early graduation rates (graduation in 11th grade) and graduation under the DAP. Students successfully completing the AP Spanish Language course acquire all the foreign language credits required for graduation under the Recommended High School Program (RHSP), now the required graduation plan in Texas as well as the DAP. Further, by scoring a 3 or better on the examination, students may earn one of the four advanced measures required for graduation under the DAP.

Students in Participant Group 1 were scheduled to graduate in the 2004–05 year on a traditional schedule. However, of those students, 14 students (5%) graduated in 11th grade. Only 3% of the peer group graduated early.

Twenty-five students (8%) in Participant Group 2 had enough credits to graduate after 11th grade and graduated early. Only 2% of their peer group graduated early.

Higher percentages of graduates from Participant Groups 1 and 2 graduated under the Distinguished Achievement Program (DAP) in either 11th or 12th grade than their peers.

Table 4.9. Comparison of DAP graduation rates

Grade	Group	DAP
11	Participant (n=39)	12 (31%)
	Peers (n=103)	15 (15%)
12	Participant (n=149)	49 (33%)
	Peers (n=884)	215 (24%)

Source. TEA PEIMS

While no long-term impacts of program participation are indicated for attendance, performance on state tests (particularly in reading), AP course taking, and graduation are school-related outcomes areas that appear to be affected by participation in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish. Generally, participants performed better on state tests in reading/English language arts than their peers and took more AP courses in high school. The AP courses most frequently taken in high school by participating students were English Language and Composition, U.S. History, and Spanish Literature and Composition. Limited data indicate that participants did not score well on AP exams in subject areas other than Spanish. In terms of graduation, participating students graduated early and under the DAP at a higher rate than their peers.

CHAPTER 5—STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACTS

Evaluation Question:

- Did students who participated in the program feel the program impacted them positively in terms of academics, future opportunities, and relationships?

The evaluation included surveys of students who had participated in the program in eighth grade in 2001–02 (Participant Group 2)²⁵ and who were scheduled to graduate from high school (on a traditional schedule) in May 2006. The evaluators identified students who had been enrolled in the same district from middle through high school for participation in the survey. Local program coordinators administered and returned program surveys. To assist district coordinators in locating Participant Group 2 students, the evaluators provided the name of the high school at which the student was enrolled. At the time of the survey, Participant Group 2 students were in Grade 12.

A total of 230 of surveys were distributed, and a total 111 completed surveys were returned by six of the seven pilot districts.²⁶

It should be noted in reading this section that the student perception data is only representative of a small portion (35%) of the group that participated in the program in year 2. Further, the students who the evaluators and district coordinators were able to locate for participation in the survey were students who were still in school and who attended school in the same community from eighth grade through high school. Not only did the survey respondents not include students who dropped out of school, but these respondents were not affected by academic disruption and other issues commonly associated with mobility. Thus, this group might be expected to provide more positive perspectives on educational outcomes generally.

Academic Profiles of Survey Respondents

Time Spent on School and Other Activities

In terms of the time spent on academic-related activities, 43% of survey respondents reported that they spent the same amount of time as their peers, and 38% said they spent more time than their peers. The majority of respondents said they spent the same amount of time as their peers on homework (59%) and non-academic activities (53%). The school clubs and organizations in which participants most frequently participated as members were focused on academics or athletics.

About half of the respondents (51%) reported they had not worked for pay during high school; 31% reported they worked 21 or more hours per week. The remaining 18% reported working between 1 and 20 hours per week. When asked to compare themselves to their peers in terms of how much they worked, 46% of respondents reported that they worked at jobs less than their peers, 30% worked the same amount as their peers, and 24% worked more than their peers.

²⁵ The evaluation was initiated after Participant Group 1—students who had participated in the program in 2000–01—had already graduated.

²⁶ One district did not return surveys.

Types of Academic Programs

Forty-four percent of survey respondents reported that they were enrolled in gifted and talented classes. Sixty-six percent indicated they had not been enrolled in the past in programs or services designed for non-native speakers of English.

Table 5.1. Participation in gifted and talented and ESL programs

Program/services	Yes	No
Gifted and talented	44%	55%
Special instruction for those whose first language is not English	34%	66%

Source. Survey data

Respondents were asked to identify the type of high school program in which they were enrolled. Thirty-five percent of students indicated they were enrolled in college preparatory or academically oriented programs, while 21% indicated they were enrolled in a “general high school plan.” Eight percent of respondents reported participating in a specialized high school program, 8% reported enrollment in “other” programs, and 18% of respondents didn’t know in what type of high school program they were enrolled.

Table 5.2. Participation in types of high school programs

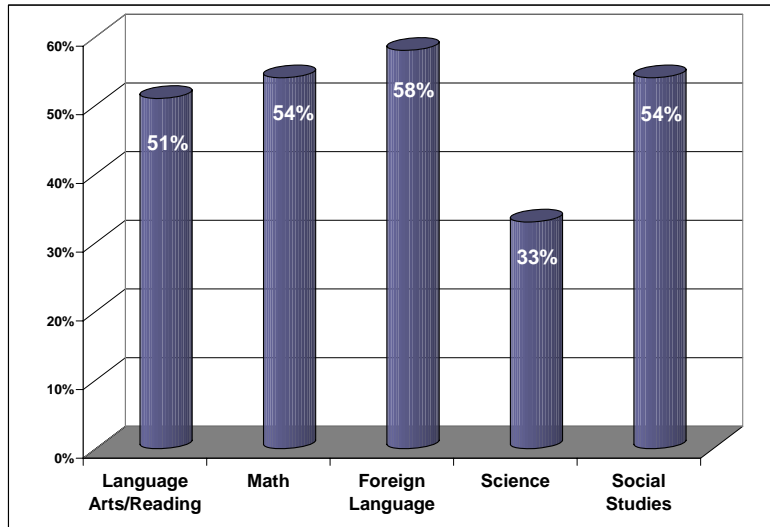
High school program type	% enrolled
College prep, academic, or specialized academic (such as science or mathematics)	35%
Vocational, technical, or business and career	10%
General high school plan	21%
Other specialized high school (such as fine arts)	8%
Other	8%
Don’t know	18%

Source. Survey data

Advanced Course Taking

Students were asked if they were enrolled in “advanced, enriched, or accelerated courses” in a variety of subject areas. Just over half of respondents (51%) reported they were enrolled in advanced courses in language arts/reading, mathematics, and foreign languages. Only about a third of students (33%) were enrolled in advanced science courses, and just over half (54%) said they were enrolled in advanced social studies courses.

Figure 5.1. Enrollment in advanced, enriched, or accelerated courses by subject area



Source. Survey data

Most students (71%) reported that their high schools offered all the courses they wanted to take in high school. In responses indicating desired courses that were not offered, language-related courses (especially French) were cited most often, followed by mathematics and computer-related courses.

Ability Groups

Students reported they were grouped in high ability groups most often in “foreign language” (66%) and language arts/reading (43%). In mathematics, science, and social studies, higher percentages of students reported being placed in middle-level ability groups (42%, 57%, and 49%, respectively). In each subject area, a small number of students reported they were placed in low ability groups. Just under 20% of students in each subject area indicated that they were not grouped or did not know what group they belonged to.

Table 5.3. Student placement in ability groups

Subject area	Ability group			
	High	Middle	Low	No groups/ Don't know
Mathematics	37%	39%	6%	18%
Science	23%	52%	6%	19%
Language Arts/Reading	43%	37%	4%	16%
Foreign Language*	60%	20%	2%	18%
Social Studies	34%	45%	5%	16%

Source. Survey data

*(i.e. Spanish, French)

Academic Performance

Over half the respondents (54%) indicated they felt that they had better grades than their peers. Student reports of grades in various subject areas were mostly in the A–B range. Most students reported grades of A in languages (63%). In language arts/reading, students reported mostly As (43%) and Bs (45%), with a few Cs (12%). Grades in mathematics fell primarily across the A–B range (36% and 40%, respectively); however, more students reported grades of C (22%) and D (2%) in mathematics than in other subject areas. Science and social studies grades were more solidly in the A–B category (54% and 53%, respectively) with a low number of Ds (1%). No failures in any of these subject areas were reported.

Reported Impacts of Participation

Students were asked to identify in which areas they were positively affected by participation in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish.

- Interest in school
- Relationships with teachers
- Teachers’ attitudes toward students
- Counselors’ attitudes towards students
- Time teachers spent with students
- Time counselors spent with students
- Academic skills
- English language skills
- Association with peers
- Plans to go to college
- Plans for career choices

The most frequently cited areas—those areas in which more than half the respondents indicated positive impacts—were: interest in school (75%); plans to go to college (74%); academic skills (68%); association with peers (60%); plans for career choices (60%); relationships with teachers (54%); and teachers’ attitudes towards students (53%).

Table 5.4. Positive impacts on academic life

Area of impact	% reporting positive impacts
Interest in school	75%
Plans to go to college	74%
Academic skills	68%
Association with peers	60%
Plans for career choices	60%
Relationships with teachers	55%
Teachers’ attitudes towards you	53%
Counselors’ attitudes towards you	45%
Time teachers spent with you	41%
English language skills	38%
Time counselors spent with you	32%

Source. Survey data

The majority of students did not report positive impacts in terms of the time that counselors spent with the student (68%), English language skills (62%), the time that teachers spent with the student (59%), and counselors' attitudes towards the student (55%).

Students also were asked to provide information on ways that they were impacted for those areas they identified as having positive impact. Summaries of these responses with some examples are provided below.

Interest in School

Respondents indicated that the high school/college credit they received for participation in the program, the impact on their grades, and the ability to get ahead and take more advanced classes or to graduate early were major positive impacts.

"The credits I got interested me more in school."

"I became more focus[ed] on my grades in school."

"I was more interested in school because I had better grades."

"I wanted to get ahead in courses!"

"Had space for other classes."

"It changed my interest by wanting to take more AP classes."

"Gave an interest for high school knowing I would finish early."

Other identified impacts focused on enhanced engagement in learning.

"It made me want to attend school frequently."

"Broadens awareness in the diverse things to do."

"I like being able to know more about our Spanish language."

"I was more dedicated."

Students also reported they felt more confident and motivated because they were encouraged or supported, felt more capable, and wanted to "do better."

"I received college hours so I decided that maybe I could do well in college."

"I proved to myself I can do it and [it] got me motivated."

"It showed me I was capable of passing any class I wanted."

"I was encouraged to do better because I had the support."

“I thought more about that Latinos could go to college too.”

“I felt more comfortable with my classes.”

College Plans

The ability to get ready early for high school and the college credit students received were frequently cited by students as positive impacts of the program. Students also reported feeling more capable of getting into and succeeding in college. Students indicated that course participation helped them understand they had more options and opportunities and focused them on future choices.

“I was glad to know I would get college credit for taking the class in eighth grade.”

“Made my transcript look better.”

“Got more interested in college opportunities.”

“I have thought of going to college because now I know I can.”

“My interests [in college] are higher.”

“I have more interest in what I want to do [in the future].”

“It helped me make better choices that will affect my future.”

Academic Skills

Students identified improved academic skills as being positive impacts of program participation. They also cited improved focus and motivation as enhancing academic skills. Broadly, students identified exposure to AP expectations as impacting student skills as well as grades and GPAs. General academic skills such as analytic ability, test-taking, and speaking and writing skills were improved by participation students said. Students also reported they learned to study and “work hard.” Language-related improvements in both first and second languages were mentioned as well.

“I developed an interest in upper-level courses (exposed me to the AP world).”

“Made me accustomed to working hard to get what I want.”

“It made my academic skills higher and had more choices in high school.”

“I learned to study.”

“My writing skills and speech skills improved.”

“Even though Spanish was my first language, I learned things I wasn’t aware of.”

“I would apply the skills I learned in Spanish for my English.”

“Understand language in a deeper way.”

Relationships with Peers

While some respondents reported improved relationships with peers in the middle school AP Spanish class, others identified impacts applicable to a broader peer community. Students cited camaraderie and identification with others in the class as positive. With other Spanish speakers outside of the class, respondents described better relationships and more frequent communication, more friendships, and opportunities to mentor or tutor others in Spanish. They cited improved speaking ability as facilitating relationships with others.

“Camaraderie was strengthened by learning from each other.”

“Taking the class helped me to advance, which led [me] to meet others with higher academic skills.”

“I found people like myself, and we identified with one another.”

“I made more friends that [spoke] Spanish.”

“Better relationships with Spanish-speaking friends.”

“People with limited English feel more comfortable around [me].”

“I give them advice about taking Spanish AP.”

“I helped others.”

Career Plans

Students frequently cited an expanded perspective on future career opportunities as a positive impact of program participation. In general, students reported a heightened interest or focus on future career choices. They understood they had more choices and were more confident about possibilities for good paying jobs. Many had already identified specific career choices. Students also reported a heightened understanding of the value of being bilingual in expanding career options with several students identifying specific careers that would take advantage of their Spanish skills.

“It brought many ideas and plans for life.”

“I discovered new interests.”

“I have more choices for careers.”

“Helped me to understand that away from home, I would be a good candidate for better paying jobs.”

“Being bilingual gives me many career choices.”

“Now I know what can go on if you speak both languages.”

“I may end up being a Spanish instructor.”

“My career pathways are in the medical field and knowing how to speak better does help in order to understand the patients.”

Relationships with Teachers

Students reported improved relationships with their teachers both in the middle school AP Spanish class and in high school. Some student comments indicated that their improved speaking and communication skills specifically helped in their relationships with teachers. Some students reported they felt less inhibited in communicating with teachers—more confident and comfortable—and that teachers were more understanding and helpful and had more respect for and interest in students as a result of their participation in the middle school AP course.

“I had a great teacher, and my relationship with her helped my relationships with other teachers.”

“I have more confidence to talk to them.”

“There was more communication.”

“Teachers were more helpful when needed.”

“They like a student with a five in an AP exam.”

“Got interested in what teachers thought of me or cared about my grades.”

“Teachers appreciated my bilingual skills.”

Teachers’ Attitudes

Respondents said that as a result of their participation in the class, they felt that teachers’ attitudes about them as students had improved. They said teachers thought they were more serious students and more hardworking, and teachers had greater respect and faith in their abilities. Increased teacher interest, support, and attention were commonly mentioned.

“I think they realized I was trying hard; they appreciated it.”

“Made me stand out because I wanted to learn.”

“Many teachers were impressed I had taken [an] AP course in eighth grade.”

“Teachers would talk to me with a lot more respect.”

“They supported me more.”

“They thought of me as smarter because I was bilingual.”

Future Objectives

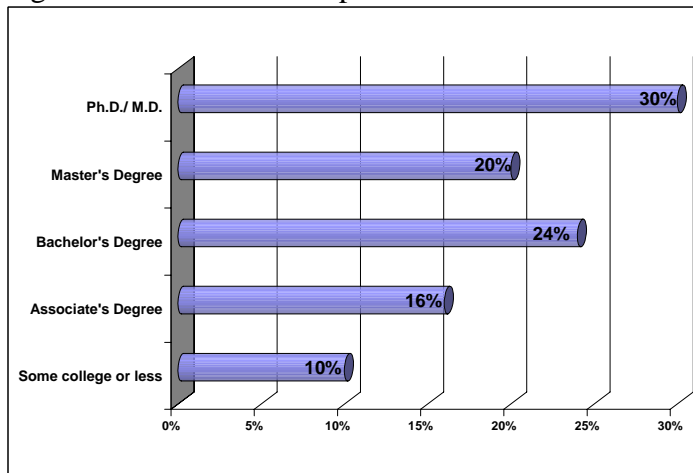
The survey included questions about student goals and plans for the future. Students identified providing quality opportunities for their children, pursuing an education, and work and career issues as their top four most important future considerations. “Being able to give my children better opportunities than I’ve had,” was ranked most frequently as “very important” by respondents (96%). Ninety-three percent of respondents felt pursuing an education was “very important.” Both “being successful in my line of work” (92%) and “being able to find steady work” (88%) were also cited frequently as “very important” to respondents.

College Plans

The majority of students (88%) reported they planned to apply to college. Students were further asked to identify colleges or universities to which they had or would apply. Most identified Texas public and private institutions that were primarily four-year universities, including both flagship and satellite campuses. Relatively few students reported they would apply to community colleges or out-of-state institutions.

Half of the surveyed students aspired to advanced degrees, and almost 75% planned to go to college immediately after high school. Approximately 25% felt they would finish a four- or five-year college degree, while 20% identified a master’s degree or equivalent as a target. Additionally, 30% of respondents indicated they hoped to obtain a Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced degree. Only 16% of respondents thought they would complete two or more years of college only (including a two-year degree), and under 10% indicated they expected to complete less than two years of post-secondary education.

Figure 5.2. Educational aspirations



Source. Survey data

In preparation for applying to college, more than 64% of respondents reported they had taken or planned to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT), and a total of 68% either planned or had already taken the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) during the

2005–06 academic year. Over half the students reported that they had taken or planned to take the American College Testing (ACT) exam in 2005–06.

Table 5.5. Completed or planned participation in college entrance exam

Exam	% taking or planning to take
Pre-SAT	64%
SAT	68%
ACT	54%

Source. Survey data

About half of the students indicated that their parents had participated in college-related workshops with them.

Careers

Students were also asked to predict the job or occupation they planned to have right after high school and also when they were 30 years old. Jobs planned for after high school were scattered across categories ranging from clerical to professional and including most sectors (agriculture, military, education, sales, service, and technical). By the age of 30, over half of the students anticipated they would be in professional positions.

Students who participated in the program indicated they were positively impacted in terms of their interest in school, plans to go to college, academic skills, associations with peers, plans for career choices, relationships with teachers, and teachers' attitudes towards students. Most participating students were actively planning to attend college, many aspired to advanced degrees, and over half planned to pursue careers in professional fields.

CHAPTER 6—TRENDS AND ISSUES WITH POTENTIAL FUTURE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROGRAM

Evaluation Question:

- What are some issues that are likely to impact the program in the future?

This chapter looks at participation and exam performance trends in participating districts and provides information related to issues that could influence program continuation, growth, and student impacts at both the pilot and scale-up sites, as well as at the new group of 59 campuses that began offering the AP Spanish Language course to eighth graders in 2006–07.

Participation and Expansion Trends and Projections

Pilot and Scale-Up Districts

The Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish, which was first implemented in the 2000–01 school year, has been continued in each of the seven districts involved in the pilot. The number of middle school campuses offering the course in most of these districts has expanded as well. In fact, in two of the pilot districts that serve majority Hispanic student populations, all or most of the middle schools in the district now offer the program.

In four of the seven pilot districts, student participation in the program has doubled or tripled between 2000 and 2006. All of these districts were or have become majority Hispanic. Of the pilot districts serving more diverse student populations, participation has remained relatively constant or declined slightly. In one of these districts, however, participation doubled in the first three years of the program but decreased after a shift to block scheduling in 2004–05, according to the district program coordinator.

Table 6.1. Student participation in pilot districts, 2000 to 2006

District	% of Hispanic students in district 2000–01	% of Hispanic students in district 2005–06	Number of participating students					
			00–01	01–02	02–03	03–04	04–05	05–06
Austin	48	55	49	28	31	31	17	15
Brownsville	97	98	132	144	195	278	239	283
Irving	49	60	27	63	93	159	168	171
McKinney	20	22	30	39	79	49	16	17
Tyler	27	38	13	22	17	25	10	13
Valley View	100	100	43	50	70	76	82	65
Ysleta	88	91	52	71	110	118	276	278
TOTAL			346	416	595	726	808	842

Source. District-reported data

For the group of 13 scale-up sites, the number of campuses offering the program and student participation increased slightly overall in the second and third years of implementation. A few scale-up sites expanded participation by offering several sections of the course at some campuses, and several districts expanded the program to additional middle schools. Compared to the original pilot sites, however, growth in these sites has not been nearly as dramatic, even in districts serving mostly Hispanic student populations. One campus dropped out of the program entirely. While it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to determine causes for the comparative modest program growth at these sites as compared to the pilot sites, several possibilities exist. The lower expansion rate could be due to the lack of continued funding to promote program expansion.²⁷ However, growth at some campuses and not others could indicate that local factors, such as leadership and commitment to the program, in addition to student demographics, are more influential.

Table 6.2. Student participation in scale-up districts, 2003 to 2006

District	% of Hispanic students in district 2003–04	% of Hispanic students in district 2005–06	Number of participating students		
			03–04	04–05	05–06
Aldine	58	61	27	31	21
Canutillo	96	95	18	14	32
Comanche	39	42	13	10	12
Fabens	98	98	20	20	17
Garland	35	39	16	30	30
Harlandale	95	95	7	13	9
Hidalgo	98	100	24	29	42
Houston	58	58	17	19	22
Los Fresnos	93	94	13	22	40
Northside	59	61	16	38	39
Spring Branch	53	52	21	53	59
Tyler (Dogan)	32	34	10	17	*
Waco	46	48	44	54	57
TOTAL			246	350	380

Source. District-reported data; AEIS; College Board May 2006 AP Score Distribution Report: Texas

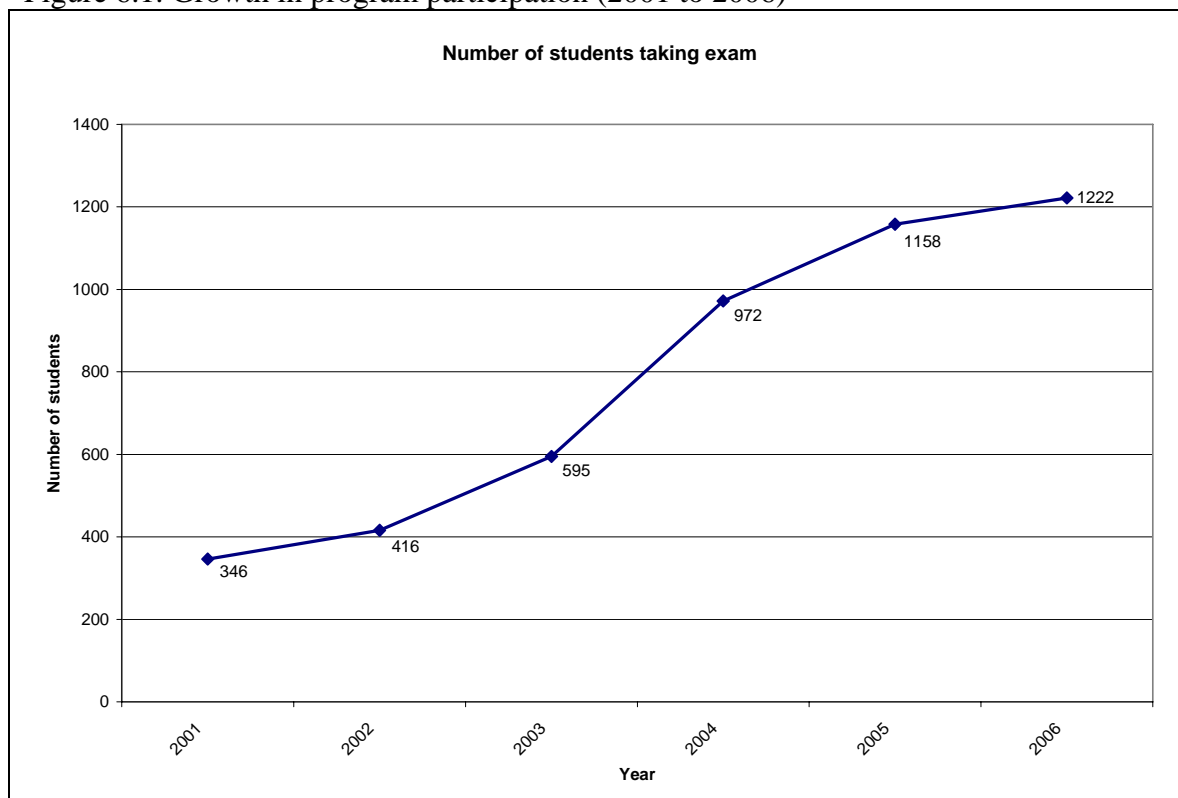
*Program discontinued at the Dogan Middle School campus.

Statewide, participation increased by 17% between the first and second years of the program, by 30% between the second and third years, by 39% between years 3 and 4 (when the scale-up districts implemented new programs), by 16% between 2003–04 and 2004–05, and by 5% between 2004–05 and 2005–06. Overall, after a five-year period of significant expansion—both through local expansion efforts and the scale-up efforts

²⁷ Pilot districts received small grants to serve as mentors and expand program as part of the scale-up project.

promoted through the state grant program—growth in participation seems to be leveling off at the existing campuses.

Figure 6.1. Growth in program participation (2001 to 2006)



Source. District-reported data

Statewide Expansion Program

In March 2005, TEA awarded \$10,000 planning grants to an additional 59 campuses to implement the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish. Some of the campuses applying for funds were in districts that had participated in the pilot or scale-up program and were already operating programs in one or more middle schools. Other districts that had not previously offered the program applied on behalf of one or multiple campuses in the district. (See Appendix A for a list of 2005 expansion sites.)

Grantees in this second phase of expansion began offering the class to eighth graders in fall 2006. As of April 1, 2006, most grantees returning planning grant progress reports to TEA indicated they had completed or almost completed student identification for 2006–07 enrollment in the course. Based on this district-reported data, a broad estimate of enrollment in the course at these campuses would be around 850 students.

While enrollment projections for 2006–07 were not requested from the seven pilot and 13 scale-up districts, participation in these districts over the previous two years totaled above 1,000. Thus, a conservative estimate for 2006–07 statewide enrollment in the eighth-

grade middle school course including all sites receiving TEA program grants at some time since 2000 would be 1,850 to 2,000 students.²⁸

Student Exam Performance and Changes in the AP Spanish Language Exam

Student performance on the AP Spanish Language has been consistently high. For four continuous years (2001 to 2004), approximately 90% or more of participating students who took the test received a score of 3, 4, or 5 on the exam. Generally, students who receive a score of 3 or better on AP exams are eligible for college credit at most colleges and universities. In the second and third years of the program when students selected for program participation became more representative of their peers, the number of students receiving scores of 3 or better on the AP Spanish Language examination increased. Further, in 2003–04, when enrollment increased by almost 40% with the addition of the scale-up districts to the program, the percentage of students scoring 3 or better on the exam only decreased 2% from the previous year. (See Figure 6.2.)

In May 2005, however, the percentage of students scoring 3 or better on the AP Spanish Language exam dropped considerably (15%) across all schools and districts participating in the program, from 93% scoring 3 or above in May 2004 to 78% in 2005. This drop coincided with changes to the AP exam. According to the College Board website, these changes involved the following: “the number of multiple-choice question types was reduced. Specifically, the cloze and error recognition parts no longer appear. While there will be an increase in the number of questions in the remaining types, the number of multiple-choice questions will decrease overall.”²⁹

In response, TEA initiated an awareness and professional development effort to inform program staff about the exam changes. In 2006, exam performance improved from 78% scoring 3 or above in 2005 to 86% in 2006.

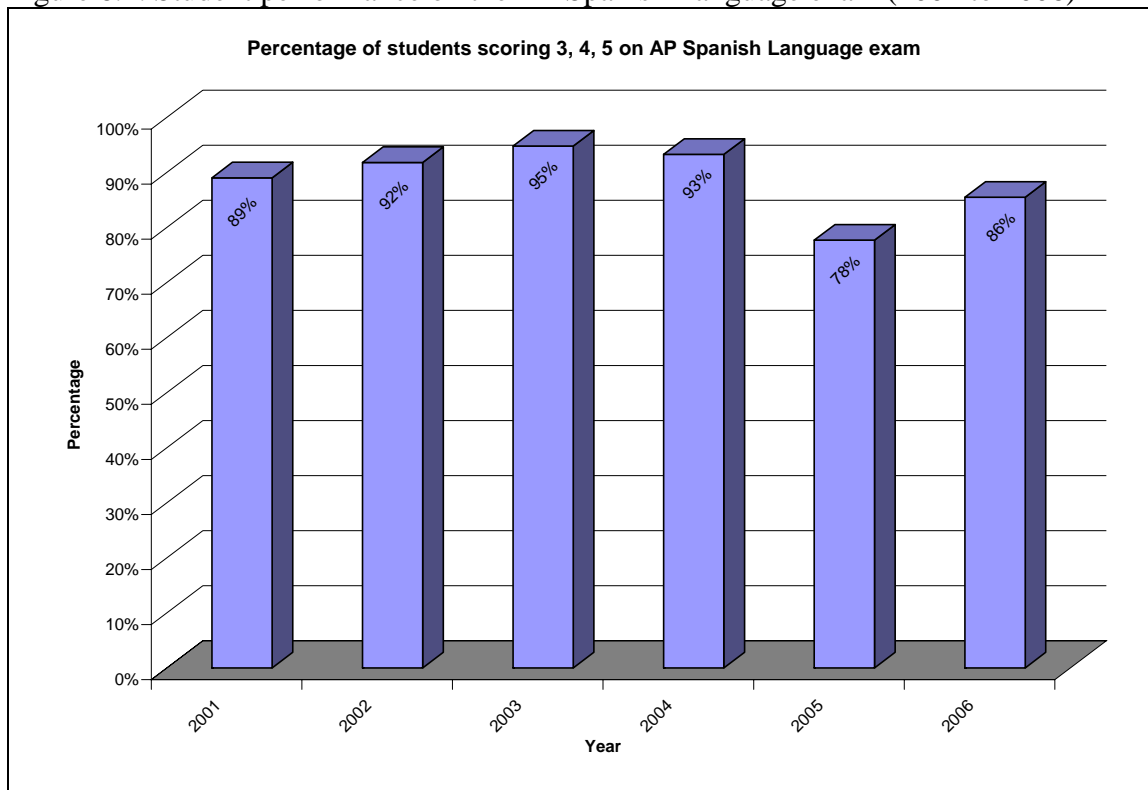
While it is beyond the scope of the evaluation to definitively link performance on the exam to the changes in the exam format or awareness of the changes, it is possible that changes in the exam could impact performance. In May 2007, additional changes to the exam will be implemented. According to the College Board AP Spanish Language course description, the changes will again reflect a new format for the exam and new question types will be introduced.³⁰

²⁸ Please note, these enrollment projections do not include the number of students enrolled in Pre-AP Spanish courses in sixth and seventh grade at many of the participating campuses.

²⁹ See http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/repository/ap05_2006_exam_format_46933.pdf. Cloze testing is common in language testing. In a cloze test passage, words are left out of the text, usually every fifth or seventh word, and readers are asked to fill in the blank.

³⁰ See <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/members/article/1,3046,151-165-0-50015,00.html#changes>.

Figure 6.2. Student performance on the AP Spanish Language exam (2001 to 2006)



Source. District-reported data

Since its inception, the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish has grown from serving approximately 350 students in the program pilot to over 1,000 students per year. The program has continued at almost of all of the original sites that implemented it during the pilot and scale-up programs. With a 2005 expansion program and distribution of planning grants to 59 additional campuses, student participation in 2006–07 could reach 2,000 students. The first four years of the program, performance on the AP Spanish Language examination reflected a high level of student success with over 90% of students receiving a score of 3 or better. These scores usually qualify students for college credit at most colleges and universities. In 2005, however, a drop in student performance on the exam coincided with changes to the exam. In 2006, exam performance improved from 2005 scores but did not reach the 90% level of previous years. Changes to the exam in 2007 also could impact student performance.

CHAPTER 7—SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of findings including the characteristics of participating students; the relationship between program participation and long-term, school-related outcomes for students at the pilot districts; student perceptions of program impacts; and trends and issues that could impact the program in the future. Conclusions and recommendations follow.

Summary of Findings

Characteristics of Participating Students

The evaluation compared the characteristics of students selected for program participation during the first three years of the program (2000–01, 2001–02, 2003–04) with peer groups of all Hispanic, Spanish-speaking students at the same campuses. The analysis looked at income status, identification as Limited English Proficient (LEP), prior performance on statewide examinations, and gender. Grant guidelines stipulated that all students identified for program participation be Hispanic and Spanish-speaking (as determined by local home language survey or other means). No information was available to the evaluators about additional selection criteria or processes for identifying students for participation in the program. These decisions were made locally by schools and districts implementing the program. The findings on characteristics of participating students are important for understanding the longer term outcomes data presented in this report.

- *In the pilot year of the program, while the participant group reflected the economic status of its peer group, grantees appeared to be selective in identifying students to participate in terms of LEP status and prior performance on state examinations.*
 - In the first year of the program, 93% of participating students were economically disadvantaged compared to 95% of their peers.
 - Also in Year 1, 32% of participants were identified as LEP compared to 45% of their peers.
 - Eighth-grade students enrolled in the program in Year 1 had higher average seventh-grade statewide examination scores than their peers—14% higher in reading and 12% higher in mathematics.
- *Overall, in the second and third years of the pilot program, eighth-grade students enrolled in the program tended to be more representative of their Hispanic, Spanish-speaking peers.*
 - In Year 2, 95% of participants and 95% of their peers were economically disadvantaged; 90% of participants were economically disadvantaged compared to 93% of the peer group in Year 3.
 - In Year 2, 38% of participants were identified as LEP compared to 39% of their peers. In Year 3, 37% of participants were LEP compared to 37% of their peers.

- For both Years 2 and 3, the average of participants' scores on seventh-grade state assessments was only 4% higher in reading and 2% higher in mathematics than the average of scores for their peers.
- *In Years 2 and 3, in comparison with peer groups, the program served a higher percentage of "LEP exempt"—LEP students identified for exemption on statewide examinations. Representation in the program group was 7-10% higher than representation of these students in the peer groups.*
- *Schools/districts tended to select more females than males for participation in the program. Student participation data reflect a disproportionate number of female participants in comparison with peer groups.*

Relationships Between Program Participation and Long-Term, School-Related Student Outcomes

The evaluation looked at three groups of eighth-grade students who participated in the pilot program in 2000–01, 2001–02, and 2002–03 and compared them with peer groups across a range of longer term outcomes in high school. Specifically, participants were compared with non-participating peers in terms of high school attendance, performance on TAKS, AP course taking, and graduation.

- *Data do not suggest that attendance over the long term is impacted by program participation. Throughout high school, attendance rates for participant groups did not differ statistically or practically from those of peer groups.*
- *It is possible that program participation positively impacted TAKS performance in reading/English language arts. Comparing students who participated in the second and third years of the program with peers, differences in high school TAKS performance in reading were statistically significant. No impacts on TAKS performance in either subject area were found for Year 1 participants. Impacts on mathematics performance were only statistically significant for the group of students who participated in Year 3 of the program.*
- *Students who participated in the program were more likely than their peers to complete one or more AP courses in high school. Fifty-one percent of students who participated in Year 1 of the program took at least one AP course in high school compared to 13% of their peers. AP course-taking data through 11th grade for students who participated in Year 2 of the program supported this finding: 46% took at least one AP course compared to 17% of their peers.*
- *Students who participated in the program were more likely than their peers to complete an AP course in English Language and Composition in high school. Of those students participating in the first and second years of the program, 14% and 17% respectively took the AP English Language and Composition course in high school compared to 5% and 9% of their peers.*

- *The most frequently taken AP examinations taken in high school by participating students were English Language and Composition, U.S. History, AP Spanish Literature and Composition, English Literature and Composition, and Calculus AB.*
- *Information on AP exam performance by participants in high school was limited, but data suggest that participating students do not perform well on AP exams in high school in subject areas other than Spanish. While 22 of the 49 students for whom scores on AP Spanish Literature exam were available received scores of 3 or better on a 5-point scale, most students for whom scores were reported for AP exams in other subject areas received scores of 1 or 2.*
- *Students who participated in the program were more likely than their peers to graduate early and/or graduate under the Distinguished Achievement Program. Of those students participating in the first year of the program, 5% graduated early (in 11th grade) compared to 3% of their peers. Of those students who participated in the second year of the program, 8% graduated early, compared to 2% of their peers. Overall, higher percentages of participating students graduated under the Distinguished Achievement Program than their peers.*

Student Perceptions of Program Impacts

Surveys of one group of students—those participating in the second year of the program in 2001–02 (Participant Group 2)—were designed to capture student perceptions of areas in which they were impacted by participation in the program. Students who participated in the survey were those who were still enrolled in the same district as the middle school they attended. It should be noted that student mobility and student willingness to respond to the survey could have biased survey results.

- *The majority of students reported positive impacts on their academic lives. Students perceived program participation to positively affect their interest in school, plans to go to college, and academic skills.*
 - Increased student interest in school was related to opportunities for advancement, enhanced engagement in learning, and increased confidence and motivation.
 - Plans to go to college were enhanced by advanced course/college credit, awareness of opportunities, and increased confidence.
 - Academic skills were developed by exposure to higher expectations, dedication to working hard, and language-related skill improvement.
- *Relationships and career awareness represented other areas in which students were positively impacted. Communication and identification with peers, plans for career choices, relationships with teachers, and teachers' attitudes towards students were other areas in which over half the respondents reported positive impacts.*
 - Students identified and bonded with classmates in the middle school AP course.
 - Students were better able to communicate with peers and strengthen relationships with other Spanish speakers.
 - Student perspectives on career opportunities were broadened.
 - Student confidence and aspirations in terms of career choices were enhanced.

- Students valued the development of their bilingual skills, especially in terms of future careers.
- Students were better able to communicate with their teachers.
- Students felt their teachers respected them more.
- *Students did not perceive English language skills or relationships with counselors to be areas of high positive impact.*
- *The majority of participating students aspired to advanced degrees.*

Trends and Issues With Potential Future Implications

Several issues that could inform or influence the continuation of the program were investigated. These include program expansion and student participation trends, new program implementation, performance on the AP Spanish Language examination, and future changes on the AP Spanish Language exam.

- *Schools and districts implementing the program tended to continue and expand the program at the original campuses and at additional campuses in the district.* The number of schools offering the program and the number of students participating in the program has grown relatively steadily since its inception in 2000–01 from approximately 17 schools offering the program to 350 students in 2000 to approximately 50 schools offering the program to more than 1,000 students in 2005–06. Data indicate that this expansion trend could be leveling off.
- *Program growth was most consistent in districts serving a majority Hispanic student population.*
- *The majority of participating eighth graders earned a 3, 4, or 5 on the AP Spanish Language examination making them eligible for college credit.* Approximately 90% of participating students each year from 2001 to 2004 scored 3 or above on the exam.
- *Changes to the exam format could impact student performance.* In 2004–05, changes in the format of the AP Spanish Language examination coincided with a drop in the percentage of students receiving scores of 3 or better on the exam from 93% in 2004 to 78% in 2005. In 2005–06, performance of participating students improved from 2004–05 rates to 86% scoring 3 or better. Upcoming changes on the 2007 exam also could impact student performance.
- *Statewide participation in the program should increase in 2006–07 with new program implementation at an additional 59 campuses.* Projected statewide participation for 2006–07 is approximately 2,000.

Conclusions

- Schools and/or districts tended to be more selective in program enrollment the initial program pilot year. Student participants were less representative of their Hispanic, Spanish-speaking peers and most were already higher performing students (in terms of performance on state assessments). Perhaps grantees chose these students for the pilot year of the program because they were not certain eighth-grade students could handle the rigor of the AP course. In subsequent years, however, after the first group of participants performed well on the exam, sites tended to open up enrollment to a broader group of students that was more representative of the eligible pool of Spanish-speaking students on their campuses. Findings from Year 1, when districts were more selective, were generally supported by Year 2 findings, when selection was more representative.
- The program goal to promote the academic success of participating students was met in terms of improvements on TAKS, especially in reading. Data suggest that participating students performed better in high school reading TAKS than their peers. Participating students also took more advanced courses (specifically AP courses) in high school than their peers.
- Survey data indicated that student self-confidence and motivation and academic self-image were positively affected by program participation, which is another goal of the program. The program goal to support student aspirations and preparation for college also was met in the sense that survey data suggest some students who participate in the program began to think of themselves as “college material” as a result of being in the course and aspired not only to a college education but to advanced degrees. However, only about a third of survey respondents reported participation in college preparatory programs. Further, poor performance on AP exams could limit student access to competitive four-year colleges and could be an indicator of underpreparedness for the rigors of college. A need for continued academic support for some of these students in high school is indicated.
- Survey data indicating that participation in the program improved student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships suggests that the program helps to build some of the social scaffolding in school that research suggests supports the academic success of low-income, language-minority students.
- Enhanced bilingual skills were of value to participating students on a variety of levels. Survey data indicated that students felt the course helped them communicate and have better relationships with other Spanish speakers. Further, students specifically reported their enhanced understanding of the value of being bilingual in terms of expanded career opportunities.
- Overall, data indicated that the program is sustainable once established and is replicable both within districts and across a range of types of school communities. All districts that piloted the program in 2000 continued it through 2006 and most, usually those serving high percentages of Hispanic students, expanded the program

significantly within the district. The viability of the program could be due to the existing infrastructure of the AP program. AP courses, with their established curricula, teacher training, state reimbursement for teacher training, and standardized exam administration can be integrated into the school without requiring a huge investment in new infrastructure or resources or large amounts of funding to establish or sustain.

- The drop of 15% in scores of 3 or better on the AP Spanish Language exam associated with changes to the exam in 2005 has possible implications for both the continued expansion of the program and student outcomes. First, it is likely that the high level of student performance on the exam is linked to the continued local commitment to the program in most districts and has contributed to its continuation and expansion at many sites. Most years of the program less than 10% of participating students received low scores of 1 or 2 on the exam. With the drop in performance, and the possible similar impacts of the 2007 changes to the exam, however, local staff may find it more difficult to “sell” the program even though exam performance is still high. Further, while analysis of the relationship between how well a participating student performed on the exam in eighth grade and high school outcomes was beyond the scope of this evaluation, the links in terms of student confidence and motivation are possible and indeed probable. Clearly, teachers at the existing sites need to be made aware of the changes on the exam in order to adjust their teaching strategies to better prepare their students for success on the exam.
- Finally, while this study has shown some interesting preliminary findings about the possible impacts of the program on participating students broadly speaking, it also has raised some provocative questions about the context for the program at individual schools and the impacts on individual participants or types of participants. For example, on the school level, how do schools select students for participation among a pool of “eligible” low-income, Hispanic, Spanish-speaking students? Which schools provide continued services that support student academic success and aspirations for college? What are the practices at the school level that result in higher rates of advanced course taking by participant students once they enter high schools? How are programs different at high poverty schools serving majority Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students than at more affluent schools serving smaller numbers of Hispanic and economically disadvantaged students?

At the student level, what else can we find out about the students who are participating in this program? Are there differences in program benefits between immigrant and U.S.-born, Spanish-speaking participants or between first and later generation immigrants? What individual outcomes are most likely for students with different backgrounds? What differences are there in outcomes for students with differing language abilities at the outset in English and/or Spanish? Different genders? What are the different high school academic trajectories of students who receive high, middle range, and low scores on the AP Spanish Language exam in eighth grade?

Based on the study findings and conclusions, the evaluators present the following recommendations.

Recommendations

- An emphasis in the program has been to help participating students identify themselves as high achievers and have greater access to the opportunities that schools can provide. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) should investigate ways to help deliver on this promise and find ways to provide continued support to participating students as they move into high school. Thus, additional research on TEA's scale-up program approach of middle school/high school collaborations to offer a two-year AP Spanish Literature course early in high school for students who participate in the eighth-grade course is warranted. With approximately half the scale-up districts offering such programs, a comparison of impacts on course taking and performance on AP exams between schools offering the program and those not offering the program could be conducted. Findings could be useful to the 50 plus sites that will be implementing the program with the two-year AP Spanish Literature course after 2006–07.

An alternative would be to implement transitional and ongoing support programs, such as AVID, for students as they move into and through high school.

- TEA should investigate ways to provide ongoing or periodic supplemental training or build and support a network for AP teachers in existing middle school programs to keep them up-to-date with course and exam requirements. This need is highlighted by the fact that middle school AP teachers might be outside the traditional community of AP teachers and not be aware of program changes.
- TEA should investigate funding sources or establish partnerships to continue the program and support for schools offering it. This could include:
 - Seeding additional program implementation at new schools using the planning grant model with supplemental web-based support and other delivery methods.
 - Continuing to pair new sites with mentor sites.
 - Supporting meetings or workshops, perhaps associated with annual professional association meetings for bilingual and other language teachers, to introduce the program and provide implementation information and resources to support schools offering the program. Alternatively, regular professional development or ongoing program support offered at the state level or regionally through the education service centers for program participants is another option.
 - Researching and piloting programs and strategies that provide expanded high school support services for participating students.

- Developing the program website as a more dynamic, professional assistance site for program implementation and networking.
- TEA should support continued research on program approaches and impacts to identify best practices in local program implementation and develop a greater understanding of the impacts on individual students and different types of student groups.

This preliminary look at the long-term outcomes associated with participation in the Texas Middle School Program for AP Spanish suggests that the program has likely had a positive impact on the lives of participants in terms of academic success in school, self-confidence, and preparation for the future. The evaluation also suggests that overall there are a variety of opportunities to enhance the program by providing additional support to schools and students participating in the program. Further, the evaluation findings highlight the need for continued research to further identify promising practices and verify the viability and potential impact of the program as a statewide initiative geared to addressing the future dramatic growth of the Spanish-speaking population in Texas public schools.

Appendix A

Appendix A—2005 Expansion Program Grantees

District	Campus
Aldine ISD	Hambrick MS
Alief ISD	Alief MS
Alvin ISD	Harby JH
Amarillo ISD	Bowie MS
Athens ISD	Athens MS
Beaumont ISD	Odem Acacemy
Carrizo Springs ISD	Carrizo Springs JH
Carrolton-Farmers Branch	Fields MS
Corsicana ISD	Collins MS
El Paso ISD	Guillen MS
Everman ISD	Everman Jr. High
Fort Bend	Lake Olympia MS
Ft Worth ISD	Elder MS
Ft Worth ISD	McLean MS
Ft Worth ISD	Meachum MS
Ft Worth ISD	Rosemont MS
Garland ISD	Bussey MS
Garland ISD	Jackson MS
Garland ISD	MST Center
Grand Prairie ISD	Robert E. Lee MS
Houston Gateway Academy	
Houston ISD	Deady MS
Houston ISD	Hamilton MS
Houston ISD	Hartman MS
Hurst-Eules Bedord ISD	Hurst JH
Klein ISD	Wuderlich Intermediate
LaJoya ISD	Chavez MS
LaJoya ISD	DeZavala MS
LaJoya ISD	Garcia MS
LaJoya ISD	Memorial MS
LaJoya ISD	Richards MS
LaJoya ISD	Schunior MS
Lancaster ISD	Lancaster JH
Laredo ISD	Cigarro MS
Lewisville ISD	DeLay MS
Little Elm ISD	Lakeside JH
Mansfield ISD	Worley MS
Marble Falls ISD	Marble Falls MS
Mesquite ISD	Agnew MS
New Summerfield ISD	New Summerfields MS
North East ISD	Nimitz MS
Northside ISD	Sul Ross MS
Pflugerville ISD	Dessau MS
Pflugerville ISD	Westview MS
Plano ISD	Armstrong MS
Plano ISD	Bowman MS

Plano ISD	Carpenter MS
Plano ISD	Murphy MS
Plano ISD	Wilson MS
San Antonio ISD	Irving MS
San Antonio ISD	Lowell MS
San Antonio ISD	Tafolla MS
San Antonio ISD	Whittier MS
Spring Branch ISD	Cornerstone MS
Spring Branch ISD	Spring Woods HS
Spring Branch ISD	Westchester MS
Uvalde ISD	Uvalde JH
West Oso ISD	West Oso J H
Willis ISD	Brabham MS
Willis ISD	Lynn Lucas MS

Appendix B

**Advanced Placement Spanish Language Middle School Program
Participant Survey**

CONFIDENTIAL

This questionnaire will ask about your experiences related to participation in the AP Spanish Language Middle School Program and its impact. The questionnaire responses are confidential and will not be linked to specific individuals. All information we receive from participants will be summarized. If you would like to provide us with additional information, please feel free to add comments.

We recognize that your time is valuable and appreciate your help in gathering this information. Thank you for responding.

Date: _____

District: _____

Middle School: _____ High School: _____

Gender: _____ (M/F) Grade: _____

ACADEMICS

1. In which program did you enroll in high school? *Circle only **one** number.*

- College prep, academic, or specialized academic (such as Science or Math) (1)
- Vocational, technical, or business and career (2)
- General high school plan (3)
- Other specialized high school (such as Fine Arts) (4)
- Other (5)
- I don't know (6)

2. How often have you talked in the past to the following people about planning your high school program? *Circle **one** number on each line.*

	Not at all	Once or twice	Three or more times
a. Your father (or male guardian)	1	2	3
b. Your mother (or female guardian)	1	2	3
c. A guidance counselor	1	2	3

d. Teachers	1	2	3
e. Other adult relatives or friends	1	2	3
f. Friends or relatives about your own age	1	2	3

3. During your high school career, have you talked to a counselor at your school, a teacher at your school, or another adult relative or adult friend (other than your parents) for any of the following reasons? (ANSWER “YES” OR “NO” TO EACH QUESTION FOR COLUMNS A, B, AND C.)

	A		B		C	
	Counselor Yes	No	Teacher Yes	No	Other Adult Relative/Friend Yes	No
a. To get information about high schools or high school programs	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
b. To get information about jobs or careers that you might be interested in after finishing school	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
c. To help improve your academic work in school	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
d. To select courses or programs at school	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
e. Things you’ve studied in class	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N

Sometimes students are put in different groups so that they are with other students of similar ability. The next questions are about ability groups in certain school subjects.

4. What ability group are you in for the following classes? *Circle one number on each line.*

	High	Middle	Low	We aren’t grouped	I don’t know
a. Mathematics	1	2	3	4	5
b. Science	1	2	3	4	5
c. Language Arts/Reading	1	2	3	4	5
d. Foreign Language (i.e. Spanish or French)	1	2	3	4	5
e. Social Studies	1	2	3	4	5

5. For each of the school subjects listed below, mark the statement that best describes your grades for the eighth grade up till now? (Choose one letter grade for each subject.)

	A (90-100)	B (80-89)	C (70-79)	D (60-69)	Below 60
a. Language arts/reading	4	3	2	1	0
b. Mathematics	4	3	2	1	0
c. Foreign Language (i.e. Spanish or French)	4	3	2	1	0
d. Science	4	3	2	1	0
e. Social Studies	4	3	2	1	0

6. Are you enrolled in advanced, enriched, or accelerated courses in any of the following areas? (ANSWER “YES” OR “NO” FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes	No
a. Language arts/reading	Y	N
b. Mathematics	Y	N
c. Foreign Language (i.e. Spanish or French)	Y	N
d. Science	Y	N
e. Social Studies	Y	N

7. Did your school offer all the courses you wanted to take in high school?

YES

NO

8. If no, which courses would you have liked to have taken that were not offered?

9. Are you or have you been enrolled in the past in any of the following special programs/services? (ANSWER “YES” OR “NO” FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes	No

a. Classes for gifted or talented students	Y	N
b. Special instruction for those whose first language is not English	Y	N

10. Do you ever feel bored when you are at school? *Circle **one** only.*

- Never (1)
- Once in a while (2)
- About half of the time (3)
- Most of the time (4)

11. Were you ever held back (made to repeat) a grade in school?

YES NO

If yes, indicate at which grade level(s) you repeated:

- a. Kindergarten (0)
- b. Grade 1 (1)
- c. Grade 2 (2)
- d. Grade 3 (3)
- e. Grade 4 (4)
- f. Grade 5 (5)
- g. Grade 6 (6)
- h. Grade 7 (7)
- i. Grade 8 (8)
- j. Grade 9 (9)
- k. Grade 10 (10)
- l. Grade 11 (11)
- m. Grade 12 (12)

12. How many days of school did you miss over the past year?

- a. None (0)
- b. 1 or 2 days (1)
- c. 3 or 4 days (2)
- d. 5 to 10 days (3)
- e. More than 10 days (4)

13. Have you participated in any of the following **school** activities during the current school year, either as a member, or as an officer (for example, vice-president, coordinator, team captain)? *Circle **one** number on each line.*

	Did not participate	Participated as a member	Participated as an officer
--	---------------------	--------------------------	----------------------------

a. Academic organizations/clubs	1	2	3
b. Vocational education organizations/clubs	1	2	3
c. Fine arts organizations/clubs	1	2	3
d. Athletic organizations/clubs	1	2	3
e. Religious organizations/clubs	1	2	3
f. Other organizations/clubs	1	2	3

14. Compared to your peers, how would you rate yourself on the following items? *Circle one number on each line.*

	Less/worse than peers	Same as peers	More/better than peers
a. Grades	1	2	3
b. Amount of time spent on homework	1	2	3
c. Amount of time spent in academic-related activities	1	2	3
d. Amount of time spent in non-academic activities	1	2	3
e. Amount of time spent on paid work	1	2	3

15. During high school, have you had a paying job, not counting chores around the house or summer jobs? On average, how many hours do you work/have you worked a week for pay? *Circle one only.*

- None, never work for pay (1)
- Up to 4 hours a week (2)
- 5-10 hours a week (3)
- 11-20 hours a week (4)
- 21 or more hours a week (5)

16. Which of the job categories below comes closest to the kind of work you do/did for pay on your current or most recent job? (Do not include work around the house. If more than one kind of work, choose the one that paid you the most per hour.) *Circle one only.*

- Have not worked for pay (1)
- Yard work (2)
- Waiter or waitress (3)
- Newspaper route (4)

- Babysitting or childcare (5)
- Farm or agriculture work (6)
- Other manual labor (7)
- Store clerk, salesperson (8)
- Office or clerical (9)
- Odd jobs (10)
- Other (11)

If other, describe:

17. Did your participation in the 8th grade AP Spanish program positively affect the following areas? (ANSWER “YES” OR “NO” FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes	No
a. Interest in school	Y	N
b. Relationships with teachers	Y	N
c. Teachers’ attitudes towards you	Y	N
d. Counselors’ attitudes towards you	Y	N
e. Time teachers spent with you	Y	N
f. Time counselors spent with you	Y	N
g. Academic skills	Y	N
h. English language skills	Y	N
i. Association with peers	Y	N
j. Plans to go to college	Y	N
k. Plans for career choices	Y	N

For each letter to which you responded “yes,” please indicate in what ways you were positively impacted.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____
- f. _____

- g. _____
- h. _____
- i. _____
- j. _____
- k. _____

18. During your high school career, did your parents/guardians participate in any of the following school sponsored activities? (ANSWER “YES” OR “NO” FOR EACH LINE.)

	Yes	No
a. Session about college financial aid	Y	N
b. Session about college admissions processes	Y	N

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

19. How important is each of the following to you in your life? *Circle one number on each line.*

	Not Important	Somewhat Important	Very Important
a. Being successful in my line of work	1	2	3
b. Finding the right person to marry and having a happy family life	1	2	3
c. Having lots of money	1	2	3
d. Having strong friendships	1	2	3
e. Being able to find steady work	1	2	3
f. Helping other people in my community	1	2	3
g. Being able to give my children better opportunities than I’ve had	1	2	3
h. Living close to parents and relatives	1	2	3
i. Getting away from this area of the country	1	2	3
j. Working to correct social and economic inequalities	1	2	3
k. Having children	1	2	3
l. Having leisure time to enjoy my own interests	1	2	3

m. Getting away from my parents	1	2	3
n. Pursuing an education	1	2	3

20. What do the following people think is the most important thing for you to do right after high school? *Circle one number on each line.*

	Does Not Apply	Go to college	Get a full-time job	Enter a trade school or an apprenticeship program	Enter military service	Get married	They think I should do what I want	They don't care	I don't know
a. Your father	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
b. Your mother	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
c. Your friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
d. A close relative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
e. School counselor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
f. Your favorite teacher	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
g. Coach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
h. Yourself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

21. As things stand now, how far in school do you think you will get?
Circle only one number.

- Less than high school graduation (1)
- High school graduation only (2)
- Vocational, trade, or business school after high school:
 - Less than two years (3)
 - Two years or more (4)
- College program:
 - Less than two years of college (5)
 - Two or more years of college (including two-year degree) (6)
 - Finish college (four- or five-year degree) (7)
 - Master's degree or equivalent (8)

Ph.D., M.D., or other advanced professional degree

(9)

22. Have you taken or are you planning to take any of the following tests this year? *Circle one number on each line.*

	I haven't thought about it	No, don't plan to take	Yes, this year	Yes, already took
a. Pre-SAT test	1	2	3	4
b. College Board (SAT) Scholastic Aptitude Test	1	2	3	4
c. American College Testing (ACT) test	1	2	3	4
d. Advanced Placement (AP) test	1	2	3	4
e. College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)	1	2	3	4
f. Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB)	1	2	3	4
g. Preliminary American College Testing (PACT) test	1	2	3	4

23. If you have already taken one of these tests, what did you score?

- a. Pre-SAT _____
- b. SAT _____
- c. ACT _____
- d. AP _____ Subject Area: _____
- e. AP _____ Subject Area: _____
- f. AP _____ Subject Area: _____
- g. CLEP _____

24. Do you plan to go to college after you graduate from high school? *Circle only one number.*

- No, don't plan to go to college (1)
- Yes, right after high school (2)
- Yes, after staying out of school

- for one year (3)
- Yes, after staying out of school for over a year (4)
- Don't know (5)

25. If you plan to go to college after high school, which schools have you/will you apply to?

26. Which of the categories below comes closest to describing the job or occupation that you expect or plan to have right after high school and when you are 30 years old? Even if you are not sure, mark your best guess. *Circle one number for each column.*

	Job after high school	Job at 30
CLERICAL such as bank teller, bookkeeper, secretary, typist, mail carrier, ticket agent	1	1
CRAFTSMAN such as baker, automobile mechanic, machinist, painter, plumber, telephone installer, carpenter	2	2
FARMER, FARM MANAGER	3	3
HOMEMAKER OR HOUSEWIFE ONLY	4	4
LABORER such as construction worker, car washer, sanitary worker, farm laborer	5	5
MANAGER, ADMINISTRATOR such as sales manager, office manager, school administrator, buyer, restaurant manager, government official	6	6
MILITARY such as career officer, enlisted man or woman in the Armed Forces	7	7
OPERATIVE such as meat cutter, assembler, machine operator, welder, taxicab, bus, or truck driver	8	8
PROFESSIONAL such as accountant, artist, registered nurse, engineer, librarian, writer, social worker, actor, actress, athlete, politician, but not including a school teacher	9	9
PROFESSIONAL such as a clergyman, dentist, physician, lawyer, scientist, college teacher	10	10
PROPRIETOR OR OWNER such as owner of a small business, contractor, restaurant owner	11	11

PROTECTIVE SERVICE such as detective, police officer or guard, sheriff, fire fighter	12	12
SALES such as salesperson, advertising or insurance agent, real estate broker	13	13
SCHOOL TEACHER such as elementary or secondary	14	14
SERVICE such as barber, beautician, practical nurse, private household worker, janitor, waiter	15	15
TECHNICAL such as draftsman, medical or dental technician, computer programmer	16	16
NOT PLANNING TO WORK	17	17
OTHER	18	18
DON'T KNOW	19	19

