

Texas Study of Students at Risk: Efficacy of Grants  
Supporting Academic Success from Elementary  
Through High School

October 2004

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Texas Study of Students at Risk

The Texas Study of Students at Risk (TxSSAR) is a comprehensive evaluation examining the effectiveness of the statelevel programs with the common goal of helping students at risk of failure to achieve academically. The study comprises investigations of the Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP), the Texas After School Initiative (TAS) and the Ninth Grade Success Initiative (NGSI), and case studies of districts that received NGSI grants. The evaluation covers a four-year period between the 1999-2000 and 2002-2003 school years.

### OPTIONAL EXTENDED YEAR PROGRAM

First established by the 73rd Texas Legislature in 1993, the Optional Extended Year Program (OEYP) is a state program with the goal of meeting the needs of elementary and middle school students (kindergarten through grade 8) who are at risk of not being promoted to the next grade level. Competitive grants allow districts to provide an extended-year program for up to 30 instructional days for eligible students, with the ultimate goal of reducing reentry rates.

#### PROGRAM ELEMENTS

**Characteristics of districts.** Between 1999-2000 and 2002-2003, the total number of districts receiving OEYP funds was 695, 682, 672, and 684, respectively. The average award actually paid to districts was between \$76,000 and \$80,000. Paid awards ranged from \$317 to over \$5,000,000.

**Characteristics of students.** About 190,000 students participated in the OEYP each year. Participants are distributed across grades 1 through 8, with the largest proportion being third graders. Compared to the state, OEYP served a greater proportion of Hispanic students (about 64%), slightly more African American students (about 18%), and substantially less White students (about 17%). OEYP students were also likely to be economically disadvantaged (about 79%) and limited English proficient (about 31%).

**Program types.** About two-thirds of OEYP students participated in an extended-or intercession program only, whereas about one-fourth only participated in an extended

instructional days) than extended (54% to 80% of days) or extended (62% to 70% of days) programs.

Retention. Districts are using student retention in the early grades as a means to support academic performance. Across four years, about 23% of OEYP first graders, 16% of second graders, and 9% of third graders were retained. In contrast, retention rates for students in grades 4 through 8 were typically less than 5%. Compared to state averages, retention rates for OEYP students in grades 1 to 3 are far higher (about 17, 12, and 6 percentage points, respectively) but only slightly higher for students in grades 4 to 8 (about 2 percentage points). For all grade levels, student retention rates tended to increase across the four OEYP program years.

State-level assessments. Passing rates on state assessments (TAAS reading, math, writing, science, social studies, and all tests) were well below state averages for the four OEYP student cohorts studied. For cohort 1 (1999) and cohort 2 (2000) students, TAAS passing rate gains (from the year before to the year after full OEYP participation) exceeded state gains. However, TAAS to TAKS passing rate gains for cohort 3 students (2001) were mostly less than state gains. Thus, the achievement gap between OEYP students and state averages was narrowed for cohort 2, but not for cohort 3.

#### ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PROGRAM ELEMENTS AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

To further explore the association between OEYP student and district characteristics and TAAS reading and mathematics TLI scores, researchers used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM). Separate analyses were conducted using participants in 1999 (cohort 1) and 2001 (cohort 2). Anal

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