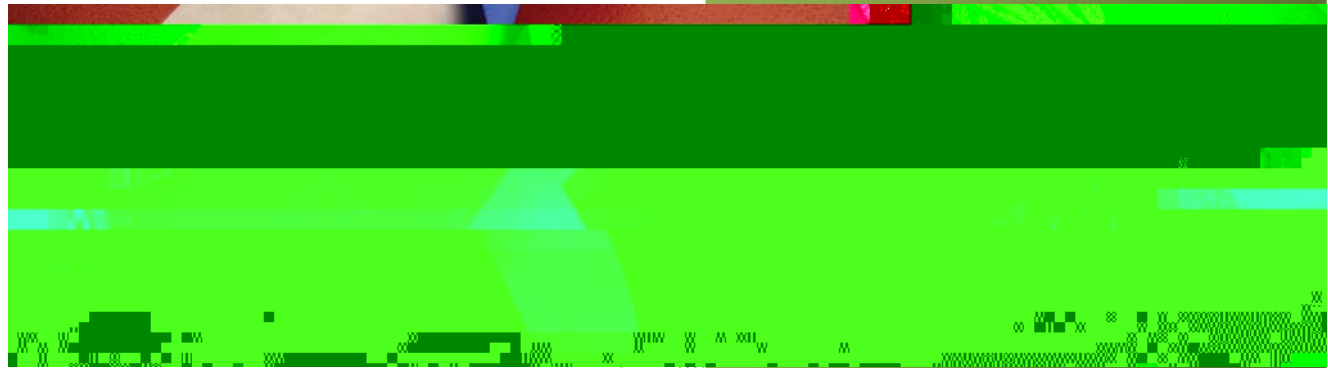


Texas High School Completion and Success Grant, Cycle 2



*Program Evaluation
Final Report*

GIBSON
CONSULTING GROUP

SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL



August 2007

A FINAL PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT OF THE

Copyright ' Notice The materials are copyrighted © and trademarked ™ as the property of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and may not be reproduced without the express written permission of TEA, except under the following conditions:

- 1) Texas public school districts, charter schools, and Education Service Centers may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for the districts' and schools' educational use without obtaining permission from TEA.
- 2) Residents of the state of Texas may reproduce and use copies of the Materials and Related Materials for individual personal use only without obtaining written permission of TEA.
- 3) Any portion reproduced must be reproduced in its entirety and remain unedited, unaltered and unchanged in any way.
- 4) No monetary charge can be made for the reproduced materials or any document containing them; however, a reasonable charge to cover only the cost of reproduction and distribution may be charged.

Private ~~Materials~~

A. Executive Summary

During the regular legislative session of 2003, the State of Texas authorized funding for high school completion and success initiatives. The Texas High School Completion and Success (THSCS) Grant Program was created as an innovative strategy to improve high school completion rates. The program was designed to target under performing high schools and high schools with low completion rates through competitive grants. Cycle 2 of the THSCS Grant included awards to 106 school districts and open enrollment charter schools. Programs were implemented at 173 campuses within these school systems. Funding for Cycle 2 started in October 2004 and ended in February 2007. Amounts awarded to school districts ranged from \$15,000 to \$600,000.

This report presents an evaluation of the THSCS, Cycle 2 Grant program and makes recommendations to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) that may benefit this and other state level programs. The following objectives for the evaluation project were defined by TEA:

To assess the quality of the THSCS, Cycle 2 Grant programs implemented at grantee campuses and their impact on student achievement results.

To document observed changes at THSCS, Cycle 2 grantee campuses between the spring 2005 and spring 2006 site visits, and complete a cross site analysis of programmatic successes (activities that were successful in improving student achievement) and failures (activities that failed to significantly affect graduation rates and student achievement).

To determine how the grant program has affected the attitudes and culture of the campuses where the project was implemented.

To determine best practices for improving student achievement and increasing graduation rates observed at sampled THSCS, Cycle 2 grantee campuses and create case studies of each of the sampled campuses.

To determine if participation in the THSCS, Cycle 2 Grant program resulted in better student achievement outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, grade retention rates, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills [TAKS] passing rates) for Cycle 2 grantees than for similar unfunded campuses.

To determine which activities and strategies, or combinations of activities and strategies, seemed to have the most profound impact on the various student achievement outcomes.

TEA selected Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. (Gibson) and the Southwest Educational Development Laboratories (SEDL) to conduct this evaluation. The work began in March 2005 and was completed in August 2007, and evaluated two years of program activity.

An interim report on the Cycle 2 evaluation was provided to TEA in February 2007. Since the interim report, additional analysis has been conducted and the evaluation has been updated. This final report presents findings, conclusions and recommendations for the entire study, but does not replicate the detailed work contained in the interim report. A separate, final report on the sustainability of THSCS, Cycle 1 grant activities was also previously provided to TEA.

The Cycle 2 program evaluation methodology included two surveys, 34 site visits, statistical analyses, and a cost analysis. To support an analysis of effective strategies, the evaluation team identified campus



comparison group students had a slightly higher and statistically significant TAKS mathematics scale score than THSCS students.

- o In Cohort 1, comparison group students