



# Texas Charter School Start-Up Grant (2011–2015) Evaluation First Comprehensive Report

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AYP	Annual yearly progress
CC	Campus charter school
CSP	Charter School Program
ESEA	The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
ICF	ICF International (formerly)
ISD	Independent school district
NCLB	The No Child Left Behind Act
NSD	School designated as a new school under an existing open-enrollment charter
OEC	Open-enrollment charter school
RFA	Request for Application
SEA	State education agency
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
STAAR®	State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
TEA	Texas Education Agency
TEC	Texas Education Code
UCS	University charter school



## Highlights

This report includes initial findings from the evaluation of the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program implemented by the Texas Education Agency between 2010 and 2015, in which ICF, the external evaluator: (1) examined how grantees budgeted for and used their grant funds; and (2) gathered data to understand charter school planning and initial implementation.

The way in which Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee budgeted for and used their grant funds varied by charter type, but there were no cohort-based patterns across the four cohorts of grantees in grantee spending by expenditure category.

Six potential best practices in how grantees use funds based on preliminary findings from the nine high-performing grantees across Cohorts I and II, and the four grantees that participated in site visits emerged:

1. Spending Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to establish and support school culture and climate helped foster engagement and ownership.
2. Building a diverse support network specifically to assist with a variety of processes helped with effective start-up implementation.
3. Demonstrating flexibility in planning and use of funds throughout the grant period helped grantees with implementation.
4. High-performing start-up grantees used evidence to inform practice, particularly in making decisions about policies, activities, and purchases.
5. Integrating technology with curriculum and instructional approaches helped grantees address gaps and reinforce their school models.
6. Creating a collaborative relationship among stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents helped improve the school culture.

In the final report, Research Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 will also be addressed, focusing on outcomes of students in grantee schools and comparing some outcome measures to students in neighborhood schools.

## Executive Summary

In 2010, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) applied for and was awarded a five-year federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant to support the planning, design, and initial implementation of new public charter schools authorized from the 2010–11 through the 2014–15 school years. Through this funding, TEA awarded Public Charter School Start-Up subgrants through a competitive process among four types of eligible charter schools that began in the 2011–12 school year. During the 2011–2012 competition (Cohort I grantees), TEA made subawards totaling \$5.5 million to 11 grantees, and \$9.9 million during the 2012–2014 competition (Cohort II grantees) to 17 grantees. Grantees could use funds to meet the substantial costs of starting up a charter school, through the planning phase (up to 18 months) and initial implementation phases (up to two years), in categories that included payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, capital outlay, and indirect costs.

## Evaluation of the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant

TEA contracted with ICF to conduct an evaluation of its Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program. This contract began in July 2011 and will end on August 31, 2017. Through this evaluation, ICF is (1) examining how grantees budget for and use their grant funds; (2) gathering data to understand charter school planning and initial implementation; and (3) examining charter school performance, with a particular focus on the characteristics of high-performing charter school campuses and best practices in how grantees use grant funds.

This report is the first comprehensive report to be produced for the evaluation of the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program, and it incorporates and builds on findings from the first interim brief, incorporated into this report, and includes analyses and data from both Cohort I and Cohort II grantees. In addition to analyses of grant applications, budgets, and expenditures, this report includes findings from data collected through surveys administered to charter school campus teachers, administrators, and charter holder board members and from site visits to selected Cohort I and II schools. This report continues to address Research Question 1 (In what specific ways do grantees utilize Charter School Start-Up funds?) and begins to address Research Question 2 (What best practices can be identified in how grantees use funds?).

## Key Findings

### ***Research Question 1: In what specific ways do grantees use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds?***

Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee spending through September 30, 2014 and, therefore, needs, had not changed drastically across Cohorts I and II (between 2011 and 2014), and charter type did not connote a particular spending pattern for planning and implementation of programs. No cohort-wide patterns were found in grantee spending, although some evidence of differences in spending by charter type was apparent. When the breakdown of grantee spending between the planning and the implementation phases was examined, results were more varied. Although Cohort I grantees spent a greater proportion of their funds during planning, while Cohort II grantees spent more during implementation, the large degree of

variation within each cohort presents no clear pattern. In addition, no patterns emerged based on charter type for spending during either phase.

No cohort-based patterns were found in grantee spending by expenditure category, but Public Charter School Start-Up Grant spending by expenditure category was related to charter type. Spending by Cohort I grantees exhibited a pattern of being distributed more widely across expenditure categories, both for general funds from other sources and for Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, compared to that of Cohort II. Furthermore, there was a detectable pattern in spending differences across expenditure categories that existed based on charter school type. Patterns in spending on individual products and services may be more attributable to charter type, rather than cohort, adding evidence to the conclusion that grantees with different charter types spent grant funds differently. Upon closer inspection of grantee spending by charter type on individual products and services, grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools spent funds across a broader array of products and services than new schools designated under an existing charter and campus charter school grantees. Analysis of data from future cohorts will determine if this pattern continues to exist.

***Research Question 2: What best practices can be identified in how grantees use funds?***

Six best practices were culled from the analysis of data from the nine high-performing grantees across Cohorts I and II, and the four grantees that participated in site visits. Although these best practices are based on preliminary findings from two cohorts, some implications can be drawn.

**Potential Best Practice 1:** Spending Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to establish and support school culture and climate helped foster engagement and ownership. Having a clear vision from the outset of the school culture and climate that will be promoted and then devoting a proportion of funds to making this vision apparent for students, teachers, and others in the school community helped foster engagement and ownership.

**Potential Best Practice 2:** Building a diverse support network specifically to assist with a variety of processes helped with effective start-up implementation. Recognizing aspects of program development and implementation where support might be needed to build a more effective program is crucial. This strategy can make tasks seem less insurmountable, especially if guidance from experts or from those experienced in a particular area allows grantees to focus energy on other key areas that need attention.

**Potential Best Practice 3:** Demonstrating flexibility in planning and use of funds throughout the grant period helped grantees with implementation. An important consideration for this practice was maintaining the overall vision for the charter, while being open to changes. Successful grantees will need to exhibit some degree of flexibility in implementation and in how funds are used to strike a delicate balance between reinforcing a school vision established at the onset and being open to important adjustments that may emerge over time. Of equal importance is the implementation modification process; specifically, who is involved in decision making, and what data are used to prompt changes in implementation. Two aspects of the best practice of flexibility in use of funds were prevalent across grantees. First, budget revisions were carefully considered through deliberate processes such as needs assessments. Second, changes proposed through amendments did not alter, but instead enhanced, the overall vision.

**Potential Best Practice 4:** High-performing start-up grantees used evidence to inform practice, particularly in making decisions about policies, activities, and purchases. Relying on evidence from assessments and other data sources can help inform grantees of what is working and where improvements are needed, thus helping to target instructional and management approaches. This best practice speaks again to a process of continuous improvement and refinement, based on feedback from stakeholders and student needs.

**Potential Best Practice 5:** Integrating technology with curriculum and instructional approaches helped grantees address gaps and reinforce their school models. This best practice goes further than simply having technology available. By closely and thoughtfully integrating technology with the overall instructional approach, gaps across subject areas can be addressed and the school model can be reinforced for teachers and students. Implementation of this best practice can have important benefits for low-income students, who may have less access to technology outside of the school environment. In addition, overall student engagement can be improved by appropriate technology integration.

**Potential Best Practice 6:** Creating a collaborative relationship among stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents helped improve the school culture. Involving teachers and other stakeholders in decision making encourages a collective school culture and buy-in from staff.

Throughout the best practices described, a recurring theme of fostering a collaborative environment is apparent. Being open to feedback from experts, teachers, and parents is important for improvement of processes and better outcomes. By involving stakeholders, a community of individuals invested in the charter school's success is established, and students benefit from an environment shaped to their learning needs.

## Next Steps

To further address Research Question 1, the final report will include descriptive analyses similar to those provided in Chapter 1 of this report. The inclusion of data from additional grantees will allow ICF to investigate if patterns identified in this report continue to hold as more grantees are added to the analysis sample and to assess how grant funds are being spent differently by Cohorts III and IV and what the reasons might be for these differences.

To continue to address Research Question 2, the final report will include site visit data from five additional grantees from Cohort III. These additional data will allow ICF to better understand the extent to which best practices identified in this report are being implemented by grantees and whether any practices are being implemented in new and innovative ways. The additional site visit data will also allow ICF to confirm whether practices identified in this report are truly effective and to identify any additional best practices that may emerge.

In the final report, Research Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 will also be addressed, focusing on outcomes of students in grantee schools and comparing some outcome measures to students in neighborhood schools.

## Introduction

Charter schools have continued to grow in popularity over the past 20 years as promising school reform models and alternatives to the traditional public school. According to the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 6,004 public charter schools operated across the country during the 2012–13 school year—more than 6% of all public schools in the country. The number rose to 6,440 active public charter schools for the 2013–14 school year. As of 2014, 42 states and the District of Columbia had public charter school laws in effect (Center for Education Reform, 2014; National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2014).

All public charter schools share the goal of improving student achievement and being held accountable to this purpose. However, public charter schools, in comparison to traditional public schools, have greater flexibility in pursuing the goal of student achievement through various models and innovative strategies. For example, charter schools may have a Foreign Language Immersion Program or a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-focused curriculum, or they may alter the learning environment by having extended learning time or multiage/multigrade programs. Charter schools may also specifically target at-risk students or maintain parent involvement policies that are more specific than those at traditional public schools (Christensen & Lake, 2007; Smith, Wohlstetter, Kuzin, & De Pedro, 2011).

## Public Charter Schools in Texas

Texas passed its public charter school law in 1995, and the first charter schools opened in 1996. Since then, the number of charter schools operating in the state has grown steadily. As of the fall of the 2013–14 school year, there were 202 open-enrollment charter schools in operation in the state. Texas' charter school law allows for multiple school campuses to operate under one charter and additionally allows independent school districts (ISDs) to operate charter school campuses within their districts. Hence, in the 2013–14 school year, 653 charter school campuses were in operation. Approximately 4.6% (5,151,925 students) of the public school population in Texas attended charter school campuses in the 2013–14 school year.

According to the Texas Education Code (TEC §12.001), the purposes of charter schools are to

- improve student learning,
- increase the choice of learning opportunities within the public school system,
- create professional opportunities that will attract new teachers to the public school system,
- establish a new form of accountability for public schools, and
- encourage different and innovative learning methods.

In 2010, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) applied for and was awarded a five-year federal Charter School Program (CSP) Grant to support the planning, design, and initial implementation of new public charter schools authorized from the 2010–11 to the 2014–15 school years. The U.S. Secretary of Education is authorized to award CSP State Education Agency (SEA) Grants to SEAs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) Section 5201-

5211 (20 U.S.C. 7221a). In 2002, the ESEA was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Through this funding, TEA awarded Public Charter School Start-Up subgrants through a competitive process that began in the 2011–12 school year and ran through the 2014–15 school year.<sup>1</sup> According to the Request for Application (RFA) for the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant, TEA intended to support the federal program by

1. providing financial assistance to assist charter schools with planning, program design, and initial implementation; and
2. expanding the number of high-quality charter schools available to students across the state.

Four types of charter schools are eligible for the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant: campus charter schools, open-enrollment charter schools, schools designated by the commissioner of education as new charter school campuses under an existing open-enrollment charter, and university or junior college charter schools. The following is a brief description of types of charter schools eligible to receive start-up grant funds as described under TEC Chapter 12.

1. **Campus charter schools:** These charter schools may be granted by the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a school district. Applications for this type of charter must be signed by the district's superintendent or the appropriate designee. There is no legislative cap on the number of campus charter schools that can be authorized in a given year. Campus charter schools can be new campuses or conversions of an existing campus: In the 2012–13 school year there were 74 campus charter schools operating in Texas. Campus charter schools can be authorized through:
  - **TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter C, §12.052**, when a petition is signed by the majority of parents and the majority of teachers at that school campus.
  - **TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter C, §12.0521**, when a new district campus or a program is operated by an entity contracted by the district to provide educational services and is at a facility located within the boundaries of the district; and
2. **Open-enrollment charter schools (TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter D, §12.101):** These charter schools are authorized by the commissioner of the state education agency and operate as independent local education agencies with a charter holder board.<sup>2</sup> Applications for an open-enrollment charter school must be signed by the chief operating officer having legal authority to bind the organization in a contractual agreement. Legislation caps the number of open-enrollment charter schools at 225 through August 31, 2015; however,

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to the 2011–12 school year, Public Charter School Start-Up Grants were awarded on a noncompetitive basis. TEA received CSP funds for the 2010–11 school year, but none of the grants were awarded through the competitive process; two were awarded through the noncompetitive process.

<sup>2</sup> Legislation enacted in 2013 (Senate Bill 2, 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, Regular Session) modified the process for authorizing Subchapter D open-enrollment charter schools. The new charter authorization process became effective on September 1, 2013, granting authorization authority to the commissioner of education. Prior to this legislation open-enrollment charter schools were authorized by the State Board of Education (SBOE). This change affected the authorization of the Generation 18 open-enrollment charter schools, which were awarded in the fall of 2013 and began operation in the 2014-2015 school year. The open-enrollment charter schools included in the analysis presented in this report were authorized by the SBOE.

multiple campuses can be opened under an existing charter.<sup>3</sup> As of the 2013–14 school year, there were 202 open-enrollment charter schools operating 588 campuses within the state.

3. **New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter (TAC §100.1033(b)(12)):** Campuses that operate as new schools designated under an existing open-enrollment charter are also authorized by the commissioner of education and are considered open-enrollment charter schools.
4. **College, university, or junior college charter schools (TEC Chapter 12, Subchapter E, §12.152):** This type of open-enrollment charter school may be granted to a public college, university, or junior college to operate on the campus of or in the same county as the college, university, or junior college. Applications submitted by a college, university, or junior college charter school must be signed by the chief operating officer having legal authority to bind the organization in a contractual agreement. There is no legislative cap on the number of these charter schools that can be authorized in a given year. As of the 2013–14 school year, 20 of the 588 open-enrollment campuses were operated by a college or university.

In order to receive grant funds, applicants must demonstrate that they meet both statutory (federal and state) and TEA program requirements for eligibility as outlined in the RFA for the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant.<sup>4</sup>

Through the Public Charter School Start-Up competitive grant process, \$5.5 million was made available for funding new charter schools for the 2011–2012 competition (Cohort I grantees) and \$9.9 million was made available for the 2012–2014 competition (Cohort II grantees). In the first year of the competitive application process, TEA awarded 11 grants, each worth \$500,000. For the 2012–2014 competition, 17 grants were awarded and ranged from \$162,500 to \$600,000.<sup>5,6</sup> Grantees may use funds to meet the substantial costs of starting up a charter school, through the planning and initial implementation phases. Per the provisions set forth in Title V, Part B of NCLB, TEA awarded all subgrants to grantees for a period of not more than three years, of which the grantee may use not more than 18 months for planning and program design and not more than two years for the initial implementation of a charter school.

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<sup>3</sup> Legislation enacted in 2013 (Senate Bill 2, 83<sup>rd</sup> Texas Legislature, Regular Session) gradually increases the authorization cap for Subchapter D open-enrollment charter schools over time each fiscal year through September 1, 2019, when the cap will be 305 charter schools. This change became effective on September 1, 2013, and was in effect for Generation 19 open-enrollment charter schools, which were awarded in the fall of 2014.

<sup>4</sup> [2014–2015 Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Competitive RFA, Part 2: Program Guidelines](http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=25769807872), pages 10–13: <http://tea.texas.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=25769807872>.

<sup>5</sup> An additional grantee, Victory Prep, was awarded start-up funds during the same time as Cohort II. However, because Victory Prep was already serving students and because its grant period (which ended December 31, 2012) is different from that of other Cohort II grantees, it was not included in the evaluation.

<sup>6</sup> Three other schools were awarded funding at the same time as Cohort II but did not open in the 2012–2013 school year (Elite Academy, Champions Academy, and Global Learning Village). Therefore, these schools are not included in the analyses.

## Description of Grantees

Table 1.1 lists the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program grantees, their charter holder organizations and charter authorization types by grant cohort.

**Table 1.1. Grantees, Charter Holder Organizations, and Charter Authorization Types**

Grantee Charter Holder Organization	Charter Authorization Type
<b>Cohort I</b>	
<b>Arrow Academy</b> Leadership Education Foundation	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Compass Academy</b> Compass Academy	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Highland Park Critical Thinking Campus</b> San Antonio Independent School District	Campus Charter School
<b>Infinity Preparatory Middle School</b> Uplift Education	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>Leadership Prep School</b> Leadership Prep School	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Newman International Academy of Arlington</b> Newman International Academy	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Pinnacle Preparatory Academy</b> Uplift Education	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>Premier Learning Academy</b> Premier Learning Academy, Inc.	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Rhodes Technology and Media Charter School</b> San Antonio Independent School District	Campus Charter School
<b>Travis Early College High School</b> San Antonio ISD	Campus Charter School
<b>William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity (WALIPP)</b> WALIPP	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Cohort II</b>	
<b>Austin Achieve</b> Austin Achieve Public Schools, Inc.	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy</b> Fallbrook Community Development Center	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Founders Classical Academy</b> Texas College Preparatory Academies	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>Houston Gateway Academy, Elite Campus</b> Houston Gateway Academy, Inc.	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>Innovation Academy, University of Texas at Tyler</b> The University of Texas System	University Charter School
<b>KIPP Coastal Village Middle</b> Galveston Independent School District	Campus Charter School
<b>Luna Preparatory Secondary</b> Uplift Education	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter



Grantee Charter Holder Organization	Charter Authorization Type
<b>Legacy Preparatory Academy</b> Legacy Preparatory Academy	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>The Media Arts Academy</b> Texas College Preparatory Academies	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>Prime Prep Academy</b> Uplift Fort Worth CDC	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>The REAL Learning Academy</b> Wayside Schools	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>UME Preparatory Academy</b> UMEP, Inc.	Open-Enrollment Charter School
<b>Uplift Meridian Preparatory</b> Uplift Education	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter
<b>Uplift Mighty Preparatory</b> Uplift Education	New School Designation Under an Existing Open-Enrollment Charter

As shown in Table 1.1, Cohort I grantees were made up of six open-enrollment charter schools, three campus charter schools, and two new schools designated under an existing charter. Cohort II grantees, on the other hand, had seven new schools designated under an existing charter, five open-enrollment charter schools, one campus charter school, and one university charter school.

The geographic service areas targeted by these grantees were varied. Five of the top ten largest school districts in Texas (based on student enrollment) are represented in this list, including Austin ISD, Dallas ISD, Fort Worth ISD, Houston ISD, and San Antonio ISD. In addition, some grantees were located in less populated places, such as Midland.

The targeted enrollment for Year 1 ranged from 54 to 1,500 students per grantee, with a combined projected enrollment of more than 4,000 students for Cohort I grantees and more than 7,000 students for Cohort II grantees. Seven Cohort I grantees and all but one of the Cohort II grantees planned to serve students who would have otherwise attended traditional schools “in need of improvement.”<sup>7</sup> The projected number of staff members for Year 1 ranged from 8 to 80 staff members per school, with a total of 343 staff at Cohort I schools and 512 staff at Cohort II schools. Appendix A includes a summary table of Cohort I and II grantees that describes them in terms of the geographic area served, charter type, and projected enrollment and staffing.

<sup>7</sup> Schools identified as “in need of improvement” are those that are identified by TEA as being a Priority or Focus school. Please see TEA’s website for more information on [Priority and Focus schools](http://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/Monitoring_and_Interventions/School_Improvement_and_Support/Priority,_Focus,_and_Reward_Schools/): [http://tea.texas.gov/Student\\_Testing\\_and\\_Accountability/Monitoring\\_and\\_Interventions/School\\_Improvement\\_and\\_Support/Priority,\\_Focus,\\_and\\_Reward\\_Schools/](http://tea.texas.gov/Student_Testing_and_Accountability/Monitoring_and_Interventions/School_Improvement_and_Support/Priority,_Focus,_and_Reward_Schools/).

## Evaluation Approach and Data Sources

Although much research has been conducted on the effectiveness of charter schools, findings tend to be mixed and many questions still remain, such as *what practices are related to the best outcomes and under what circumstances?* TEA has contracted with ICF to conduct an evaluation of its Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program. The evaluation began in July 2011 and will end on August 31, 2017. Through this evaluation, ICF is examining how grantees budget for and use their grant funds; gathering data from charter holder boards, administrators, and teachers to understand charter school planning and initial implementation; and examining charter school performance, with a particular focus on the characteristics of high-performing charter school campuses and best practices in how grantees use CSP funds.

The evaluation of the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant is being guided by five research questions:

1. In what specific ways do grantees use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds?
2. What best practices can be identified in how grantees use funds?
3. Within high-performing charter schools, to what extent do student outcomes differ by charter school type, mission, or focus?
4. To what extent do student and school outcomes differ between high-performing charter schools and traditional neighborhood schools?
5. To what extent do student and school outcomes differ between charter schools approved and funded through the 2011–2015 competitive grant process and those approved for noncompetitive funding in 2010–11?

This evaluation includes the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from a wide range of stakeholders. Qualitative components of the evaluation include content analyses of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant applications and grantee mission statements, as well as site visits to high-performing charter school campuses that incorporate interviews with charter school administrators and representatives from the charter holder board, focus groups with teachers, and document reviews.

Quantitative methods include a quasi-experimental study comparing student achievement in high-performing charter school campuses funded through the grant and traditional neighborhood schools; analyses of responses to online surveys of teachers, administrators, and charter holder board members to gather information about charter school planning and implementation, including the nature and perceived value of the professional development received; and systematic collection and analysis of grantee expenditure data.

## Evaluation Approach for the Report

For this evaluation, ICF will prepare two comprehensive reports and two interim briefs to collectively address the six research questions. The first interim brief, submitted to TEA in December 2011, began to address Research Question 1. It described the characteristics of the 2011–2012 Public Charter School Start-Up grantees, who were the first cohort of grantees to receive Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds under the competitive application process, and provided a preliminary analysis on how grantees allocated their grant funds. Most of the

findings were based on information provided in their grant applications, from their school websites, and from the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant expenditure data from TEA.

The current report is the first comprehensive report to be produced for this evaluation. It incorporates and builds on findings from the first interim brief and includes analyses and data from both Cohort I and Cohort II grantees (recipients of 2012–2014 Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds). In addition to analyses of grant applications, budgets, and expenditures, this report presents findings from data collected through surveys administered to charter school campus teachers, administrators, and charter holder board members and from site visits to selected Cohort I and II schools. This report continues to address Research Question 1 and begins to address Research Question 2.

## Data Sources

Analyses of qualitative and quantitative data were conducted, using seven sources of data: Public Charter School Start-Up grantee applications; grant budgets; grant expenditure data (Expenditure Data); grantee's application amendments; the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey (Expenditure Survey); surveys of grantee administrators, teachers, and charter holder board members; and interviews and focus groups conducted during site visits. The following is a more detailed description of each data source and the types of analyses conducted.

**Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Applications.** An analysis of Cohort I and II grantees' applications was conducted to provide descriptive information about projected student enrollment and staffing, as well as an estimate of the number of at-risk students who would attend.

**Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Budgets.** Cohort I and II grantees' proposed start-up grant budgets were extracted from their grant applications. Quantitative analyses of these data were conducted to describe how grantees intended to use their planning and implementation funds and to identify any patterns across charter types.

### **Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Data (Expenditure Data).**

Reimbursement requests for the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant expenditures were tracked in TEA's grantee expenditure database. Analyses were conducted on expenditures from the time of the grant award on April 1, 2011 to November 30, 2012 for Cohort I, and from the grant award on May 1, 2012 to September 30, 2014 for Cohort II, examining how grantees spent grant funds to carry out planning and implementation activities during these time periods (Research Question 1).

**Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Application Amendments.** In addition to grant expenditure data, amendments to grantees' applications requesting alterations to grant funding requests were reviewed to inform both Research Questions 1 and 2. These data helped discern how grantees planned for and used start-up grant funds.

**Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey (Expenditure Survey).** This instrument was developed by ICF and administered in the spring of 2012 to Cohort I grantees and in the spring of 2013 to Cohort II grantees. The purpose was to gain a more detailed

understanding of the specific products and services on which schools spent funds, beyond the broader categories included in the data retrieved from TEA's grantee expenditure database (Research Question 1).

**Surveys of Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Administrators, Teachers, and Charter Holder Board Members.** Responses to selected items from surveys administered in the spring of 2012 and spring of 2013 (to Cohorts I and II, respectively) were analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of the decision-making processes of grantees. Surveys were administered online and included a wide range of questions about the school facility, instructional approach and curriculum, technology, professional development, school operations, school governance and leadership, and challenges to starting a charter school.

**Site Visit Interviews and Focus Groups.** Site visits to four grantee charter school campuses took place in May 2014. To be eligible for a site visit, the charter school campuses had to demonstrate early evidence of success with student outcomes. Nine grantee charter school campuses met the requirements, and four were selected for a site visit. Three of the charter school campuses visited were Cohort II grantees, and one was a Cohort I grantee. Each of the site visits included interviews with school administrators and charter holder board members as well as focus groups with teachers. Data were analyzed using codes and subcodes related to site visit goals and areas of interest, and findings were extracted to help identify potential best practices. Both Research Questions 1 and 2 were addressed through analysis of data from site visits.

## Structure of the Report

The following report is divided into three chapters. These chapters include findings from Cohort I and Cohort II grantees, using the data sources described above; where appropriate, comparisons are made between cohorts as well as charter school types:

- **Chapter 1** addresses Research Question 1, describing how grantees have used Public Charter School Start-Up funds to implement their programs. Data sources included the Expenditure Data and the Expenditure Survey. Grant amendments were also reviewed to look at changes in how grantees allocated their funds.
- **Chapter 2** addresses Research Question 2, introducing a potential set of best practices in how grantees use funds. Data sources included site visit interviews and focus groups, supplemented by data from the Expenditure Data, the Expenditure Survey, and budget amendments.
- **Chapter 3** summarizes key findings and outlines next steps for further addressing Research Questions 1 and 2 and addresses remaining Research Questions 3, 4, and 5.

Also included with this report are three appendices:

- **Appendix A** includes a summary table of Cohort I and II grantees that describes them in terms of the geographic area served, charter type, and projected enrollment and staffing;
- **Appendix B** provides details on the evaluation methodology, including specifics on analysis of charter school budgets and expenditures as well as survey administration, site visit execution, and analysis of the resulting data; and

- **Appendix C** provides individual grantee profiles (dashboards) for Cohort I and Cohort II grantees. Both versions include basic information about the grantees (e.g., charter type, charter holder organization, summary of the mission, student enrollment, grant expenditures), as well as student achievement data in mathematics and reading. The Cohort I dashboard has two years of student performance data, and the Cohort II dashboard includes baseline data on student performance in reading and mathematics.

The findings presented in this report build on initial analyses conducted for the project and provide a foundation on which the next evaluation report will expand. The final report to be published in early 2018 will incorporate data from the first two cohorts, as well as new cohorts. This report will also incorporate findings from the second interim brief as well as a complete tracking of expenditures, surveys, site visits, and student performance assessments over time. In addition, further insights will be provided into how grantees use their funds (Research Question 1); best practices employed by grantees pertaining to the use of start-up funds to support school missions and accomplish grant goals (Research Question 2); and characteristics of high-performing charter school campuses and differences in how they perform compared to other charter school campuses and to traditional neighborhood schools (Research Questions 3–5).

## Chapter 1: Grantee Use of Charter School Funds

### Introduction

This chapter provides the ICF evaluation team’s findings related to Research Question 1 of this evaluation: “In what specific ways do grantees use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds?” This chapter summarizes products and services purchased by grantees using grant funds. Specifically, the evaluation team summarizes findings from analyses using quantitative data on how Cohort I and II grantees have used their grant funds to plan and implement their educational programs. The evaluation team then presents findings from analyses of how grantees have allocated grant funds to different types of expenditures to meet their goals, looking at trends across cohorts and charter types. However, these trends or patterns are primarily descriptive in nature and provide an overview of how grantees spent or targeted their grant funds; this chapter does not evaluate the effectiveness of that spending. In chapter 2 of this report, the evaluation team reports the results in this chapter in conjunction with qualitative data to address Research Question 2, which seeks to identify potential best practices in the use of grant funds.

The analyses in this chapter are based on two sources of data. First, the Expenditure Data based on data retrieved from TEA’s grantee expenditure database was used to assess how grantees allocated their expenditures among different budget categories. Because both cohorts of grantees had submitted all modifications to their budgets before the writing of this report, these data provided a comprehensive picture of how grantees had actually been using their grant funds.

The second source of data used in this chapter is the Expenditure Survey, which was administered to Cohort I grantees at the end of the 2011–12 school year (May 2012) and to Cohort II grantees at the end of the 2012–13 school year (May 2013). Through this survey, the evaluation team collected data on the specific products and services on which grantees spent grant funds. One limitation of this data source is that it reflects expenditures only up to the point when grantees completed the survey; any additional expenditures after the survey but before the end of the grant would not be reflected in the data. However, the advantage of the Expenditure Survey is that it provides a more detailed picture of grantee spending than the Expenditure Data, which showed expenditures in broader budget categories.

### Profile of Grant Expenditures Through September 30, 2014

Answering Research Question 1 requires an understanding of how grantees decided to allocate their funds, both between different grant periods and among different expenditure categories. To analyze expenditures in a comprehensive way, the evaluation team relied on data from TEA’s grantee expenditure database after drawdowns from all grantees had been completed.

Table 1.2 shows that, on average, grantees spent 97% of the start-up grant funds that they were awarded. This percentage was similar between Cohort I (96%) and Cohort II (98%) grantees. Four grantees spent less than 95% of their total grant funds. Of these, three were Cohort I

campus charter schools and one was a new school designated under an existing charter in Cohort II.

**Table 1.2. Percentage of Grant Funds Spent by Cohort I and Cohort II Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees**

	Charter Type	Percentage of Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds Spent
<b>All Schools in Cohort I and Cohort II Average</b>		<b>97%</b>
<b>Cohort I (n = 11) Average</b>		<b>96%</b>
Arrow Academy	OEC	100%
Compass Academy	OEC	100%
Highland Park Critical Thinking Campus	CC	85%
Infinity Preparatory Middle School	NSD	100%
Leadership Prep School	OEC	100%
Newman International Academy of Arlington	OEC	100%
Pinnacle Preparatory Academy	NSD	100%
Premier Learning Academy	OEC	100%
Rhodes Technology and Media Charter School	CC	92%
Travis Early College High School	CC	80%
William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity	OEC	99%
<b>Cohort II (n = 14) Average</b>		<b>99%</b>
Austin Achieve	OEC	100%
Elite Academy	NSD	100%
Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy	OEC	100%
Founders Classical Academy	NSD	95%
Innovation Academy—University of Texas at Tyler	UCS	100%
KIPP Coastal Village Middle School	CC	100%
Legacy Preparatory Academy	OEC	100%
Luna Preparatory Secondary	NSD	100%
Media Arts Academy	NSD	83%
Prime Prep Academy	OEC	100%
The REAL Learning Academy	NSD	100%
UME Preparatory Academy	OEC	99%
Uplift Meridian Preparatory	NSD	99%
Uplift Mighty Preparatory	NSD	100%

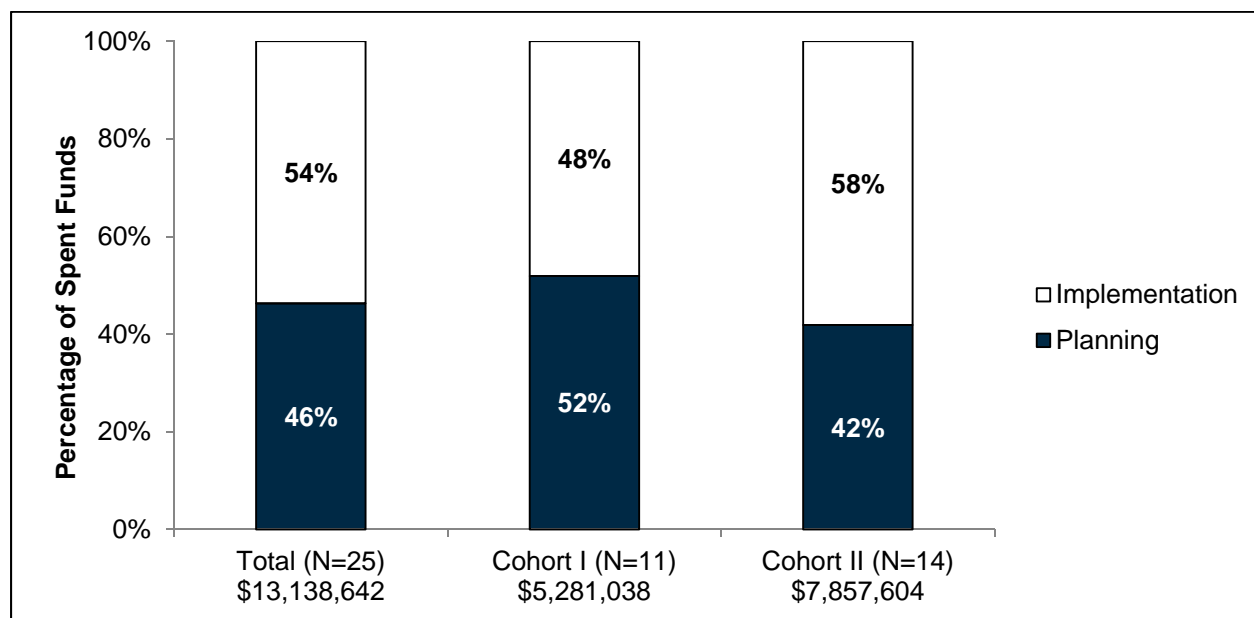
*Note.* OEC = open-enrollment charter; CC= campus charter school; NSD = new school designated under an existing charter; UCS = university charter school. Source: Texas Education Agency, Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Data, 2012, 2014.

### Breakdown of Spending Between Planning and Implementation

Grantees in both cohorts were required to categorize all expenditures between (1) program planning and design (*planning*); and (2) initial program implementation (*implementation*). Planning costs refer to expenses that were necessary for planning activities, and implementation costs refer to any expenses that were tied to implementation activities. According to the RFA, grantees could use planning funds for “not more than 18 months” and implementation funds for “not more than 2 years.”

Figure 1.1 shows the percentage of grantees' total grant funds spent for planning and for implementation. Overall, the distribution of funds between planning and implementation was relatively even, with slightly more money spent in the implementation phase (54%) than in the planning phase (46%). This breakdown was different between the two cohorts: Cohort I grantees spent a larger percentage of their grant funds on project planning, while Cohort II grantees spent a larger percentage on project implementation. However, there was considerable variation within cohorts, implying that these decisions were driven by grantee-specific needs rather than by a cohort-wide pattern. For example, in Cohort I, three grantees operating campus charter schools spent 100% of their funds on implementation, while three other grantees in Cohort I (two new schools designated under an existing charter and one open-enrollment charter school) spent less than 10% on implementation. Similarly, Cohort II included three grantees that spent more than 75% of their funds on implementation, as well as three that spent less than 35% on implementation.

**Figure 1.1. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditures Between Planning and Implementation by Cohort**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Data, 2012, 2014.

There were also no apparent patterns in this respect among grantees by charter school type; within each charter type, the breakdown between planning and implementation varied widely. For example, while the three Cohort I campus charter schools spent 100% of their grant funds on project implementation, the one campus charter school in Cohort II spent only 24% of its funds on implementation. The percentage of funds spent on implementation across grantees ranged from 0% to 100% for new schools designated under an existing charter and from 0% to 93% for open-enrollment charter schools.



## Breakdown of Spending by Expenditure Category

The terms of their grants required that Cohort I grantees allocate expenditures among six categories:

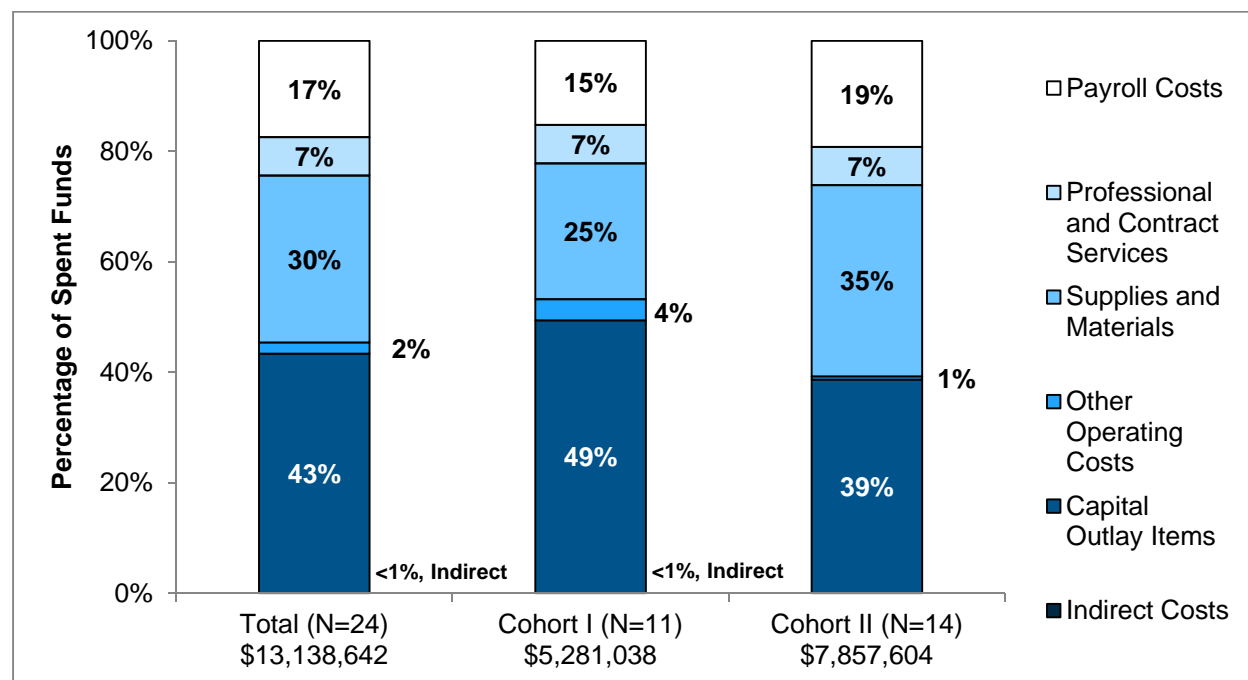
- Payroll;
- Professional and contract services (e.g., technology consulting and support, cleaning and landscaping, staff development);
- Supplies and materials (e.g., textbooks, reading materials, testing materials);
- Other operating costs (e.g., expenses for travel, conferences, insurance, miscellaneous items);
- Capital outlay items (e.g., library books, furniture, and technology hardware, software); and
- Indirect costs.

Cohort II grantees were required to allocate expenditures among the first five categories; they were not allowed to allocate grant funds to indirect costs.

Figure 1.2 shows the breakdown of Public Charter School Start-Up funds spent by grantees by expenditure category. As a whole, grantees spent the largest percentage of grant funds (43%) on capital outlay items. Approximately one third of funds (30%) was spent on supplies and materials, while 17% was spent on payroll costs. Smaller amounts were spent on professional and contract services (7%) and other operating costs.

On average, Cohort I grantees spent a larger percentage of their grant funds on capital outlay items compared to Cohort II grantees (49% vs. 39%) and a smaller percentage on supplies and materials (25% vs. 35%). This difference between cohorts is primarily explained by the fact that Cohort I included three campus charter schools whose expenditures were similar to one another's but substantially different from other grantees. For example, on average, these three campus charter school grantees spent 65% of their grant funds on capital outlay items, while the remaining eight Cohort I grantees spent an average of 43% of their total grant funds on that category. If these other eight Cohort I grantees are analyzed apart from those operating campus charter schools, their breakdown among expenditure categories looks very similar to that for Cohort II.

**Figure 1.2. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditures by Expense Category, Overall and by Cohort**



*Note.* Cohort II grantees were not given the option to allocate funds to indirect costs. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Source: Texas Education Agency, Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Data, 2012, 2014.

Figure 1.3 shows the distribution of Public Charter School Start-Up funds spent across expenditure categories by grantee charter type.<sup>8</sup> This figure shows that there are notable differences in the way grantees with different charter types have spent their grant funds. Campus charter school grantees spent nearly three quarters of their funds (71%) on capital outlay items. In addition, campus charter grantees spent less of their grant funds on payroll costs, supplies and materials, and professional and contract services than did other charter types.

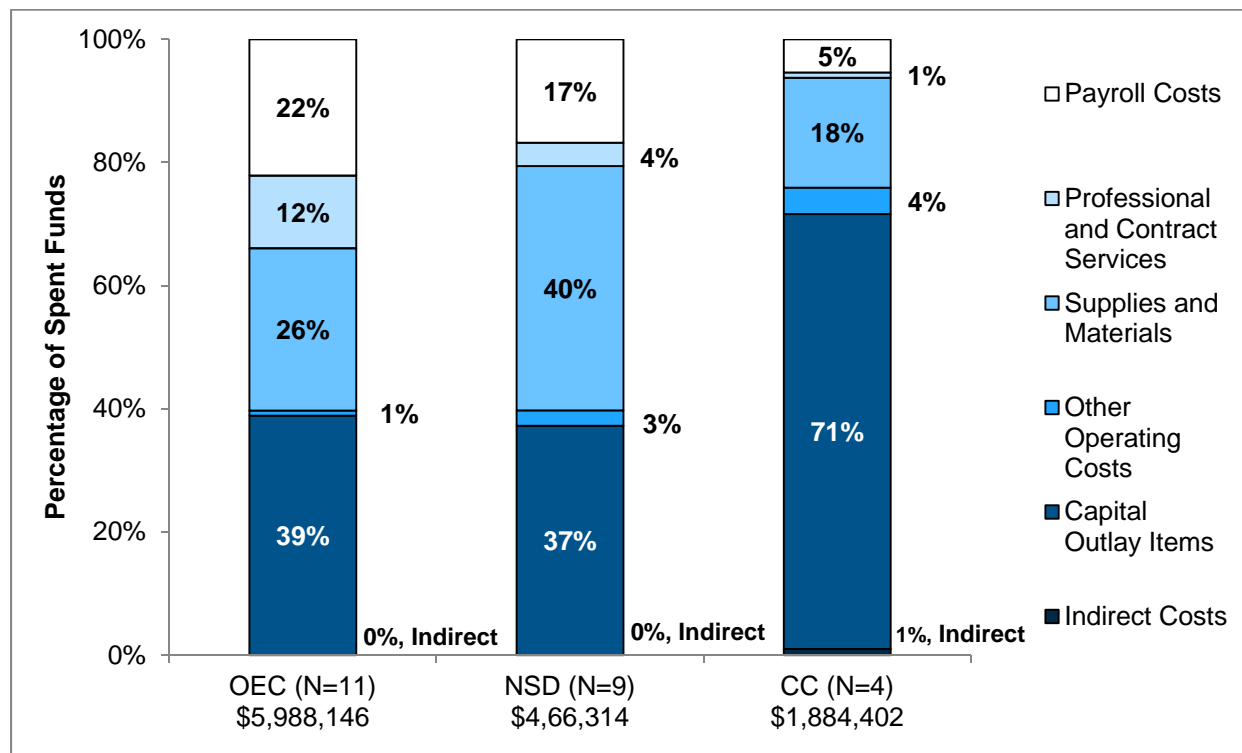
Compared to other charter types, grantees operating new schools designated under an existing charter allocated the highest percentage of grant funds for supplies and materials (40%). Grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools, on the other hand, split their funds more evenly across expenditure categories than grantees with other charter types. For example, grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools spent at least 10% of their funds on four of the five primary expenditure categories, which was not true for other types of grantees.

This pattern may be due to the possibility that grantees with open-enrollment charter schools may have operated more independently than grantees with new schools designated under an existing charter or grantees operating campus charter schools and may not have received products and services from their charter holders or authorizing districts. As a result, open-enrollment charter schools would likely have had to use their start-up grant funds more broadly.

<sup>8</sup> The university charter school grantee was not included in this analysis because it is inadvisable to attempt to discern any patterns unique to this charter type based on the expenditure data from one grantee alone.

New schools designated under an existing charter and campus charter schools, on the other hand, may have received products and services from authorizing organizations, and, as a result, could have used grant funds in more targeted ways. This pattern is explored in more detail in the following section of this report.

**Figure 1.3. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Categories by School Type (Cohorts I and II Combined)**



*Note.* OEC = open-enrollment charter schools; NSD = new schools designated under an existing charter; CC = campus charter schools. Figure 1.3 includes only charter types for which the sample size of grantees was 4 or greater. For this reason, it does not include one Cohort II grantee that received a university charter. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Source: Texas Education Agency, Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Data, 2012, 2014.

## Products and Services Purchased by Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees

Although the data from TEA’s grantee expenditure database provide a comprehensive picture of how grantees allocated their Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, one limitation of those data is that the expense categories used in the database were very broad. Therefore, ICF created the Expenditure Survey to gather more granular data from grantees about what products and services they purchased using grant funds. It is important to note that these data have one key weakness; because they are based on responses to a survey that was administered before the grant period had ended they reflect expenditures only up to that point. However, data from the Expenditure Survey still provide a detailed profile of the products and services that grantees opted to purchase with Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds.

The Expenditure Survey was administered to Cohort I grantees in spring 2012 and to Cohort II grantees in spring 2013. Two questions were asked in both versions of the survey. The first question provided grantees with a list of products and services, and asked whether grantees had purchased each item through any funding source since they received grant funds. These products and services were grouped into five categories. The first two columns in Table 1.3 show the percentage of grantees by cohort that reported spending funds on any of the products and services in each of the five expenditure categories. All grantees indicated that they spent some funds on at least one product or service related to (a) instructional programs and materials and (b) staffing, and all but one charter school campus spent funds on (c) school facilities and equipment. All of the Cohort I grantees also spent money on other services, such as legal services or outreach, while half of Cohort II grantees did so.

The second question on the Expenditure Survey provided the same list of products and services, and asked grantees to identify which they had purchased using Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. The last two columns of Table 1.3 show data from this question for both cohorts. It shows that all of the Cohort I and Cohort II grantees spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds on at least one product or service related to instructional programs or materials. In addition, most Cohort I and Cohort II grantees also spent start-up grant funds on at least one product or service related to staffing, as well as to school facilities and equipment. Besides the *instructional programs and materials* category, Cohort I grantees were more likely to spend money in all categories than Cohort II grantees. It is possible that Cohort II grantees simply had different needs than Cohort I grantees, or that Cohort II grantees learned that it was better to spend start-up grant funds on fewer categories.

**Table 1.3. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees' Expenditures by Category and Cohort**

Expenditure Category	Percentage of Grantees Reporting Having Spent Any Funds		Percentage of Grantees Reporting Having Spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds	
	Cohort I (n = 11)	Cohort II (n = 14)	Cohort I (n = 11)	Cohort II (n = 14)
Instructional Programs and Materials	100%	100%	100%	100%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	100%	50%	91%	29%
Professional Development	91%	86%	64%	36%
School Facilities and Equipment	100%	93%	100%	79%
Staffing	100%	100%	91%	86%

Source: Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey, 2012, 2013.

Table 1.4 shows the percentage of grantees that spent start-up grant funds on any product or service within a category—for example, all 25 grantees spent grant funds on at least one product or service in the category of Instructional Programs and Materials. A more detailed accounting of what percentage of grantees spent grant funds on each individual product or service is presented in Table 1.4. This table shows that almost all grantees in both cohorts spent grant funds on classroom technology hardware (92%), classroom furniture (88%), textbooks and other

instructional supplies (88%), and supplemental materials (84%). Percentages varied between the two cohorts in some areas; for example, the proportion of Cohort I grantees that spent grant funds on salaries and incentives for principals was lower than that of Cohort II grantees (36% vs. 71%), while Cohort I grantees were more likely to spend grant funds on curriculum development (73% vs. 36%). However, it is difficult to know to what extent cohort type was responsible for these differences, because the composition of the two cohorts was different in terms of the charter types of the grantees.

**Table 1.4. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees’ Use of Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds, by Product or Service, by Cohort**

Expenditure Category	Product or Service	Percentage of Grantees Reporting Having Spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds		
		Cohort I (n = 11)	Cohort II (n = 14)	All (n = 25)
Instructional Programs and Materials	Assessments	27%	29%	28%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Classroom Technology Hardware	100%	86%	92%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Core Curriculum	36%	43%	40%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Curriculum Development	73%	36%	52%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Instructional Software	64%	36%	48%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Library/Media Expenditures	45%	21%	32%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Summer School	0%	7%	4%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Supplemental Materials	91%	79%	84%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Textbooks and Other Instructional Supplies	91%	86%	88%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Advertisement (as part of outreach)	18%	14%	16%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Community Outreach Efforts	45%	21%	32%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)*	Food Services Equipment and Software <sup>a</sup>	36%	0%	16%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Specific Legal Services Related to Charter School Start-Up	36%	0%	16%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Transporting Students to or from Grant Activities	9%	0%	4%
Professional Development	Contracted Professional Development Services (e.g., speakers or presenters)	55%	36%	44%
Professional Development	Registration Fees for Staff to Attend	45%	14%	28%
Professional Development	Conferences/Workshops/Seminars			
Professional Development	Travel Reimbursement for Staff to Attend Professional Development	45%	14%	28%
School Facilities and Equipment	Building Repairs and Renovations <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	4%

Expenditure Category	Product or Service	Percentage of Grantees Reporting Having Spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds		
		Cohort I (n = 11)	Cohort II (n = 14)	All (n = 25)
School Facilities and Equipment	Classroom Furniture	100%	79%	88%
School Facilities and Equipment	Financial Management Software and Training	36%	29%	32%
School Facilities and Equipment	Insurance Payments	18%	0%	8%
School Facilities and Equipment	Mortgage Payments for School Facilities (including principal and interest) <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	4%
School Facilities and Equipment	Rent for School Facilities <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	4%
School Facilities and Equipment	School Maintenance (including salaries for custodial staff)	27%	21%	24%
School Facilities and Equipment	Utilities (including internet, phone, electricity, etc.) <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	4%
Staffing	Employee Benefits	55%	64%	60%
Staffing	Professional Staff Extra-Duty Pay	36%	7%	20%
Staffing	Salaries and Incentives for Principals	36%	71%	56%
Staffing	Salaries and Incentives for Teachers	18%	29%	24%
Staffing	Salaries for Project Management Staff (e.g., project director, project coordinator)	64%	50%	56%
Staffing	Salaries for Substitute Teachers	45%	0%	20%
Staffing	Salaries for Support Staff (e.g., administrative assistant, office manager)	64%	50%	56%

Source: Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey, 2012, 2013.

<sup>a</sup> Respondents entered these expenditures in the open-ended Other category; they were then categorized by the ICF team.

<sup>b</sup> According to the Texas Education Agency, building repairs and renovations, mortgage payments, rent for school facilities, and utilities are not allowable expenses under the grant. It is possible that the Cohort I grantee that indicated that they spent grant funds on these categories was mistaken or misinterpreted the question. However, Table 1.5 reflects the survey responses as they were provided by the grantees.

To assess whether grantees with different charter types might spend funds in systematically different ways, ICF repeated its analysis of the Expenditure Survey data, using each charter type as a separate group. Table 1.5 presents the results of this analysis.<sup>9</sup> As the table shows, at least three quarters of grantees in all charter types spent grant funds on at least one product or service related to instructional programs and materials and to staffing. Overall, grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools were as or more likely to spend grant funds on

<sup>9</sup> Note that the one university charter school grantee was removed from the analyses in Figure 1.3, Table 1.5, and Table 1.6 to eliminate the identification of the survey data from an individual school.

products or services in four of the five categories as grantees operating new schools designated under an existing charter or campus charter schools. For example, almost three quarters of grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools spent grant funds on other services such as legal services or outreach, while no more than half of grantees operating new schools designated under an existing charter or campus charter schools spent grant funds on those products and services.

**Table 1.5. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditures by Category and Charter Type**

Expenditure Category	% of Grantees Reporting Having Spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds		
	OEC (N=11)	NSD (N=9)	CC (N=4)
Instructional Programs and Materials	100	100	100
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	73	44	50
Professional Development	64	11	75
School Facilities and Equipment	100	67	100
Staffing	91	89	75

*Note.* OEC = open-enrollment charter; NSD = new school designated under an existing charter; CC= campus charter. One university charter school grantee was removed from the analyses in to eliminate the identification of the survey data from an individual school. Source: Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey, 2012, 2013.

Table 1.6 breaks down the expenditure data further by charter type, presenting the percentage of grantees that spent grant funds on each individual product or service. As one would expect, this analysis mirrors the same patterns that were apparent in Table 1.6. For example, 91% of grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools spent funds on instructional software, compared to none of the grantees operating new schools designated under an existing charter. Similarly, 73% of grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools used grant funds for curriculum development, and 64% purchased financial management software or training—again, none of the grantees operating new schools designated under an existing charter used grant funds for either purpose. Grantees operating campus charter schools also spent money differently than grantees of other types. For example, none of the four campus charter school grantees spent any grant funds on salaries for principals, teachers, project managers, or support staff, while grantees in both of the other charter categories did so. This is likely because school districts authorize and oversee campus charters and may provide funds for these expenses themselves.

To take the analysis one step further, ICF calculated the average number of products or services on which grantees of each type reported spending grant funds. Grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools reported spending grant funds on an average of 14.1 products and services listed on the Expenditure Survey, compared to 8.2 for grantees operating new schools designated under an existing charter and 9.8 for campus charter school grantees. These data indicate that new schools designated under an existing charter and campus charter school grantees did target their funds on fewer products and services, while open-enrollment charter grantees spent their funds more broadly. This mirrors the evaluation team’s analysis of data from TEA’s grantee expenditure database (Figure 1.3), which also found that the open-enrollment charter school grantees spent grant funds on a wider range of products and services.



**Table 1.6. Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees' Use of Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds, by Product or Service and Charter Type**

Expenditure Category	Product or Service	Percentage of Grantees That Spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds		
		OEC (n = 11)	NSD (n = 9)	CC (n = 4)
Instructional Programs and Materials	Assessments	36%	22%	25%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Classroom Technology Hardware	82%	100%	100%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Core Curriculum	64%	22%	25%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Curriculum Development	73%	0%	100%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Instructional Software	91%	0%	50%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Library/Media Expenditures	45%	11%	50%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Summer School	9%	0%	0%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Supplemental Materials	100%	67%	100%
Instructional Programs and Materials	Textbooks and Other Instructional Supplies	91%	89%	100%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Advertisement (as part of outreach)	18%	22%	0%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Community Outreach Efforts	45%	11%	50%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Food services equipment and software <sup>a</sup>	18%	22%	0%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Specific Legal Services Related to Charter School Start-Up	36%	0%	0%
Other Services (e.g., Legal Services, Outreach)	Transporting Students to or from Grant Activities	9%	0%	0%
Professional Development	Contracted Professional Development Services (e.g., speakers or presenters)	55%	11%	75%
Professional Development	Registration Fees for Staff to Attend Conferences/Workshops/Seminars	45%	11%	25%
Professional Development	Travel Reimbursement for Staff to Attend Professional Development	45%	0%	25%
School Facilities and Equipment	Building Repairs & Renovations <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	0%
School Facilities and Equipment	Classroom Furniture	100%	67%	100%
School Facilities and Equipment	Financial Management Software and Training	64%	0%	0%

Expenditure Category	Product or Service	Percentage of Grantees That Spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Funds		
		OEC (n = 11)	NSD (n = 9)	CC (n = 4)
School Facilities and Equipment	Insurance Payments	18%	0%	0%
School Facilities and Equipment	Mortgage Payments for School Facilities (including principal and interest) <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	0%
School Facilities and Equipment	Rent for School Facilities <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	0%
School Facilities and Equipment	School Maintenance (including salaries for custodial staff)	27%	33%	0%
School Facilities and Equipment	Utilities (including internet, phone, electricity, etc.) <sup>b</sup>	9%	0%	0%
Staffing	Employee Benefits	64%	78%	0%
Staffing	Professional Staff Extra-Duty Pay	18%	0%	75%
Staffing	Salaries and Incentives for Principals	45%	89%	0%
Staffing	Salaries and Incentives for Teachers	36%	11%	0%
Staffing	Salaries for Project Management Staff (e.g., project director, project coordinator)	64%	78%	0%
Staffing	Salaries for Substitute Teachers	18%	0%	75%
Staffing	Salaries for Support Staff (e.g., administrative assistant, office manager)	55%	78%	0%

*Note.* OEC = open-enrollment charter; NSD = new school designated under an existing charter; CC= campus charter. One university charter school grantee was removed from the analyses in to eliminate the identification of the survey data from an individual school. Adapted from Source: Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey, 2012, 2013.

<sup>a</sup> Respondents entered these expenditures in the open-ended Other category; they were then categorized by the ICF team.

<sup>b</sup> According to the Texas Education Agency, and building repairs and renovations, mortgage payments, rent for school facilities, and utilities are not allowable expenses under the grant. It is possible that the Cohort I grantees that indicated that they spent grant funds on these categories were mistaken or misinterpreted the question. However, Table 1.6 reflects the survey responses as they were provided by the grantees.

## Conclusion

This chapter is intended to provide a comprehensive answer to Research Question 1: “In what specific ways do grantees use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds?” The analyses used to answer this question were based primarily on two sources of data: data from TEA’s grantee expenditure database, which provided comprehensive information about grantee spending and how that spending was spread across different budget categories, and the results of the Expenditure Survey, in which grantees detailed the specific products and services on which they spent funds.

The primary pattern that emerged in the analyses described in this chapter is that grantees with different charter types spent grant funds in various ways. Most important, grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools appeared to have spread their grant funding over a wider range of products and services, while new schools designated under an existing charter and campus charter school grantees were more likely to target their spending in a smaller number of areas. This result may be because new schools designated under an existing charter and campus charter schools were more likely to receive more services (such as legal services or financial management software) from their charter holder organizations and authorizing districts and, therefore, did not have to purchase those services themselves. For example, the three Cohort I campus charter school grantees were asked on the Expenditure Survey to identify products and services that they received from their charter holder. All three indicated that they received support with building repairs and renovations, instructional programs and materials, and community outreach efforts, as well as salaries and benefits for staff. This information corroborates the data shown in Table 1.6. None of the campus charter school grantees spent any grant funds on salaries for principals, teachers, project managers, or support staff because they reported receiving support from their charter holders for these purposes.

Although small differences in spending also existed between Cohorts I and II, these differences are largely explained by the relative breakdown of the two cohorts among grantees with different charter types. For example, Table 1.5 shows that Cohort I grantees, on average, spent grant funds on products and services in a wider range of expenditure categories. However, this difference is most likely due to the fact that Cohort II had a higher percentage of new schools designated under an existing charter than Cohort I had.

The results described in this chapter are primarily descriptive in nature, in that they seek to provide a profile of grantee spending rather than evaluating the effectiveness of that spending. The next chapter in this report will focus on several potentially promising practices in the use of grant funds.

## Chapter 2: Potential Best Practices in the Use of Funds

### Introduction

The previous chapter summarized the products and services purchased by grantees with Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. This chapter elaborates on those findings by offering a closer examination of effective ways that grantees have used funds to plan, design, and implement charter school programs. Specifically, in this chapter the evaluation team answers Research Question 2 of this evaluation: “What best practices can be identified in how grantees use funds?” To answer this question, the evaluation team analyzed what types of products and services grantees found most useful, as well as the policies, strategies, and decision-making processes that influenced those purchases. The evaluation team focused analysis for this report on charter school campuses that have demonstrated early evidence of effectiveness, in order to highlight common practices associated with high-performing grantees. This examination contributes to the overall evaluation because it identifies potential best practices employed by successful charter school campuses. Future analyses will build on these findings through an exploration of findings at charter school campuses that show consistent evidence of high performance.

The evaluation team selected the schools to examine for potential best practices using a multistep process that explored accountability rating criteria and qualification criteria. These criteria were the best, based on available data to operationalize “high performance,” because they accounted for performance above the standard for each criteria. First, the evaluation team reviewed all 25 charter school grantees in the sample, which included 33 charter school campuses across both cohorts (14 in Cohort I and 19 in Cohort II), and identified 16 charter school campuses that achieved the “Met Standard” rating on all four accountability rating indices employed by TEA. Second, the evaluation team narrowed this list to those charter school campuses with a minimum 95% attendance rate *and* at least one distinction or a 100% System Safeguard score.<sup>10</sup> Nine charter school campuses met the criteria described in the selection process—five from Cohort I and four from Cohort II. ICF had previously surveyed teachers and administrators at all nine charter school campuses identified as high performing; in addition, the evaluation team selected four of the nine charter school campuses that met criteria (in order to obtain a representative sample across charter school types) and conducted focus groups and

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<sup>10</sup> Distinction designations recognize outstanding academic achievement in reading/English language arts and mathematics on various indicators of postsecondary readiness. Campuses that received an accountability rating of “Met Standard” were eligible for the following distinction designations in 2013: Top 25% Progress, Academic Achievement in Reading/English Language Arts, and Academic Achievement in Mathematics. Please see [Explanation of the 2013 Accountability Summary Report \(https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2013/manual/manual.pdf\)](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2013/manual/manual.pdf) or review the 2013 [Accountability Manual for Texas Public School Districts and Campuses \(https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2013/manual/manual.pdf\)](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2013/manual/manual.pdf). The system safeguard measures are calculated within the state accountability system to meet federal accountability reporting requirements for the purpose of identifying Priority and Focus schools. These campuses are then subject to federally-prescribed interventions based on the performance of individual student groups. A system safeguard score of 100% indicates that all groups measured for a campus met or exceeded the performance rate targets set for a particular group.

interviews during site visits at these charter school campuses. The analysis in this chapter draws on the practices from all nine charter school campuses identified as high performing, although the most detailed findings come from the four charter school campuses selected for site visits.

Throughout this chapter, the evaluation team describes *what* successful grantees do and analyzes *how* those actions contribute to their success. In the following section, the evaluation team explains how data were collected, articulates a functional definition of best practices, and outlines the limits of the evaluation approach. The evaluation team then describes six potential best practices. For each practice identified, the evaluation team uses examples to illustrate how grantees have incorporated the practice, describes how it benefits the grantee, and suggests ways other charter school campuses might adopt the practice. After highlighting the individual potential best practices, the evaluation team offers some concluding thoughts about trends or patterns common across these practices and shows how the analysis of such practices fits within the overall evaluation.

## Data Sources

ICF drew on a variety of sources to address Research Question 2, including data from site visits, the Expenditure Data, the Expenditure Survey, budget amendments, and stakeholder surveys. Overall, these data enabled ICF to examine whether practices identified were common across the nine schools found to show early evidence of success on student outcomes. In addition, these data allowed ICF to examine whether some potential best practices were similar or different across schools based on different characteristics of the schools (i.e., type of charter, type of students served, school mission). The following sections explain how the evaluation team used data to identify best practices; further detail about the data collection methodology is provided in Appendix B.

## Site Visits

Site visit data from four of the nine grantees demonstrating early evidence of success served as the starting point for identifying a range of potential best practices and effective features in the use of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. During the site visits, the evaluation team conducted interviews and focus groups with school- and district-level administrators, board members, and teachers. The purpose of these inquiries was to comprehensively explore how grantees used their Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds and to identify the decision-making practices related to their use of these funds. Data collected from the site visits provided a robust foundation in distinguishing approaches that site visit grantees identified as effective in successfully operating their charter school campuses, supporting their mission, and contributing to their early evidence of success. Once the evaluation team identified the potential best practices from the site visits, the evaluation team then analyzed other sources of data from all nine charter school campuses showing early evidence of success to assess the prevalence of the practice across the grantees and the extent to which practices identified from site visit data could be corroborated in other sources of data.

## Expenditure Data

Data from the Expenditure Survey, TEA’s grantee expenditure database, and budget amendments were first used to corroborate data from the site visits that focused on how grantees used start-up funds. These data also illuminated patterns/trends in spending across all nine schools showing early evidence of success. Identifying patterns/trends allowed the evaluation team to expand its focus beyond potential best practices from the four site visit schools and provided a framework for identifying potential best practices from the remaining five schools showing early evidence of success. Linking the patterns/trends in the expenditure data and the potential best practices across all nine of these schools was a critical step in validating the importance and prevalence of the practices the evaluation team highlights in this report.

## Stakeholder Surveys

Selected questions from the charter school stakeholder surveys were used as another source of data to substantiate and expand upon the initial set of practices identified from site visit data. The stakeholder surveys were administered to administrators, board members, and teachers of all Public Charter School Start-Up Grant charter school campuses; thus, these data were available for all nine grantees showing early evidence of success. These surveys gathered data regarding how grantees used start-up funds, how grant funds supported innovative or unique features at each school, the level of stakeholder involvement in decision making, and the challenges that schools experienced in implementing their start-up grant. Systematic analysis of these data provided additional evidence to support the potential best practices selected.

## Defining Best Practice

The charter school campuses evaluated in this report used a wide range of models in their approach to education, resulting in a diverse array of procurement practices and policies. For example, some charter school campuses focused on particular fields such as STEM, while others emphasized novel instructional approaches across subjects. This diversity necessitates a functional definition of best practices, where the merit or success of a practice can be evaluated in the context of a particular grantee’s mission. For the purposes of this report, the evaluation team defined *best practice* as a policy, procedure, or habitual action, in relation to the allocation or spending of the Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, that helps a grantee achieve its mission. These may be practices that grantee stakeholders perceive as effective on their charter school campuses or practices common across successful grantees.

## Limitations

The scope of this chapter has some important limitations. The purpose here is not to quantitatively measure or predict the impact of certain practices, nor is it to provide a representative sample of common practices employed across schools. Instead, the evaluation team seeks to identify and describe approaches that successful grantees have employed and found promising. Currently, the analysis is focused on grantees from Cohorts I and II, but as the evaluation team continues to identify consistently high-performing sites, the evaluation team may refine and expand the descriptions of best practices. At this point, the findings in this

chapter should be considered preliminary, so these practices are labeled *potential best practices*. Further, it is important to note that the main data source consists of information gathered during site visits. These visits allowed the evaluation team to gather rich information from the four charter school campuses selected for a site visit, but the selected sites constitute a small proportion of all charter school campuses examined in the overall report. Though stakeholder surveys provide additional information about all nine high-performing charter school campuses, they cannot provide the same detail gathered from the site visits.

## Analysis of Best Practices Among Grantees

In this section, the evaluation team presents findings from the analysis of six best practices identified using the methodology described in the preceding section. For each best practice, the evaluation team offers a detailed description of the practice and explains how adopting it has helped schools achieve their mission. Throughout this section, the evaluation team draws on information collected from the site visits, TEA's grantee expenditure database, the Expenditure Survey, and grant application amendments to provide specific examples of how grantees have implemented the practices the evaluation team identifies. The evaluation team uses these examples to illustrate the benefits realized by grantees that have adopted these practices and to identify patterns in the type of grantees most likely to benefit from these practices.

### Potential Best Practice 1: Spending start-up grant funds to establish and support school culture and climate helped foster engagement and ownership.

High-performing grantees reported that using Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to establish and develop a positive school culture and climate was important to their success. The particular uses of start-up funds varied from grantee to grantee because of the unique mission and circumstances of each charter school campus. Three examples illustrate how this practice helped high-performing grantees achieve their missions.

First, a Cohort II grantee (a new school designated under an existing charter) used start-up funds to purchase furniture and decor to clearly distinguish between spaces for middle and for high school students, who were housed in the same building. According to an administrator at this charter school campus, using the funds in this way improved the atmosphere for students and staff because it created an age-appropriate atmosphere conducive to students' learning styles.

Another Cohort II grantee (a campus charter school) reported that it spent start-up funds on murals, signs, and other means to communicate a unified message about school culture. During a site visit, the evaluation team observed several bright murals and signs that reinforced the values, expectations, and aspirations of the school. Administrators explained that students helped write slogans and chants to articulate their perceptions of school values and that these messages were reflected in the signs and murals. This collaborative process, they explained, encouraged student buy-in and enthusiasm for school goals. Teachers interviewed during the site visit confirmed these results and said they perceived a better atmosphere during the second year of the grant, after these practices had been implemented, than when the school had just opened.

A Cohort I open-enrollment elementary school is a third example of a high-performing grantee using start-up funds to build a positive school climate. At this charter school campus, staff attended training on positive behavior support for students with diverse backgrounds and needs. Following the training, teachers implemented a positive behavioral support system in classrooms. This system, called Preparing Outstanding Warriors with Wisdom to Overcome and Win (POWWOW), was complemented by assemblies that reinforced the school culture and emphasized character development. Teachers reported that using this system improved their ability to communicate expectations to students and fostered a climate conducive to learning. They indicated that investing in the training created a school-wide culture that reflected the unique mission of the charter school campus.

The above examples show how implementation of a best practice can vary across grantees, depending on their needs and mission, but can create similar benefits. At a diverse group of charter school campuses (including elementary through high schools as well as new and existing schools), grantees reported that using Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to develop and support school culture promoted a consistent message from staff. According to individuals interviewed during the site visits, this consistency fostered positive attitudes from students and contributed to the grantees' mission by reinforcing the schools' particular approaches to instruction.

### **Potential Best Practice 2: Building a diverse support network specifically to assist with a variety of processes helped with effective start-up implementation.**

The evaluation team found that high-performing grantees developed support networks and established relationships with education stakeholders, including TEA, to assist with a variety of processes (e.g., business management and compliance with Public Charter School Start-Up Grant guidelines) and to maximize grant resources. Through these partnerships, grantees said they could draw on more expertise and experience than they had in-house, resulting in more effective uses of grant funds.

During site visits, the evaluation team identified a variety of ways that grantees obtained support from outside entities for expert support, specifically in the area of financial management. For example, the evaluation team visited a new open-enrollment charter school campus from Cohort I that worked with its regional Education Service Center (ESC) to help with its budgeting and strategic planning. During the site visit, representatives from the school explained that this relationship helped them implement their vision in an efficient way and helped the school staff avoid pitfalls in the financial aspects of the operations. A Cohort II school offered another example. This grantee, a new school designated under an existing charter, received hands-on help from district-level finance staff and from colleagues at existing charter schools with budgeting tools to manage finances. During the site visit, staff reported that these relationships built a strong financial foundation at their new school.

In addition to the management support discussed above, the evaluation team observed that high-performing charter school campuses capitalized on the support provided by TEA. For example, during a site visit with a Cohort II grantee, the school leadership described a



collaborative relationship with TEA, where school officials consulted TEA guidelines regularly and spoke with TEA staff when they had questions about the guidelines. According to information collected during the site visit, these discussions facilitated open communication between parties.

Finally, the evaluation team found that cooperative purchase agreements helped charter school campuses realize economies of scale in their use of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. For example, a charter school campus from Cohort II reported that it procured discounted supplies and materials by partnering with other schools to buy in bulk. Another school, a Cohort I grantee, was exploring a joint consortia agreement with other schools to obtain discounts on supplies and equipment. At the time of the site visit, the staff said they had not yet entered into any agreements with other parties, but had already identified cost savings the school could achieve when it finalized its plans.

Cultivating relationships and establishing support networks helped grantees use funds effectively in several ways. Most importantly, by allowing grantees to leverage resources from entities with specific areas of expertise (e.g., financial management), they were able to focus more on their core competencies. Even when consultations between grantees and external stakeholders (e.g., community members, businesses) did not result in direct partnerships, the relationships built a foundation of trust between stakeholders. This foundation benefited all types of grantees, but was especially useful for open-enrollment charter schools. For these schools, building a diverse support network was critical to achieving their goals, because they were sometimes stand-alone schools that might not have had access to resources or support that may normally accompany other types of charter school campuses.

### **Potential Best Practice 3: Demonstrating flexibility in planning and use of funds throughout the grant period helped grantees with implementation.**

The evaluation team found that high-performing grantees demonstrated flexibility with the use of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, while still maintaining the overall vision for their charter. They achieved this flexibility by striking a balance between adhering to their original design and making adjustments as necessary. They were not rigid in their implementation and did not miss opportunities to learn during the grant period. During the site visits, high-performing grantees reported that they followed the original grant budget during the first year, during which they said that they would spend about half their funds. However, in the second year, they often filed amendments based on deliberate and collaborative needs assessments.

This process was a potential best practice for two main reasons. First, it allowed grantees to incorporate lessons learned during the first year of the grant. These lessons varied from grantee to grantee, but often were related to the professional development activities that teachers found most beneficial or to technologies that staff perceived were most useful with students in the first year. Second, the amendment process itself was an opportunity to bring administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders together to talk about how they were spending grant funds.

During a site visit with a Cohort II grantee, the evaluation team saw how this practice contributed to their success. An administrator explained that the initial grant plan did not include funds for standardized textbooks and that various teachers used different materials for similar

courses during the first year of the grant. At the end of the first year, administrators and teachers met to discuss the school year and learned that teachers and parents believed standardized curriculum materials would ease transitions from grade to grade. Based on this needs assessment, they filed an amendment to use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to provide the same textbooks across classrooms.

High-performing grantees were not the only ones to file amendments, but they shared some common approaches to amendments during site visits. First, high-performing grantees were careful not to file amendments that would alter the overall vision of the grant. Instead, they used amendments to better *achieve* the original grant vision. Second, high-performing grantees capitalized on the amendment process to institutionalize collaborative processes for discussing their needs. For example, all four high-achieving schools visited by the evaluation team reported that teachers and administrators discussed the best ways to spend funds during the second year of the grant. Through these collaborations, decision makers were able to gain a better understanding of the needs of all teachers at the school to ensure appropriate and effective spending of start-up grant funds.

#### **Potential Best Practice 4: High performing start-up grantees used evidence to inform practice, particularly in making decisions about policies, activities, and purchases.**

High-performing grantees used evidence and data to make decisions about policies, practices, and purchases. The review of the Expenditure Data revealed that high-performing grantees were twice as likely to report using Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds for assessments as other grantees (44% vs. 19%). To learn more about this pattern, during the site visits to high-performing charter school campuses, the evaluation team asked school leaders how data influenced their decision making. At three of the four schools visited, administrators said that student assessment data played an important role when determining how to spend Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. Specifically, administrators said they used these data to decide what intervention models to implement at their charter school campuses and what professional development to offer for teachers. For example, one grantee used student data to identify weaknesses in student mathematics and reading skills and then selected interventions targeted to the areas where students needed most support.

Moreover, high-performing grantees also established data collection policies and systems to capture their findings from targeted interventions and professional development activities. For example, a Cohort I grantee noted on its survey response that it was “using technology ... to conduct assessments of student learning and (making) data more accessible to teachers.” By collecting and using data, this charter school campus created a cycle where evidence was used to identify an intervention and then data from those interventions were used to refine practices and identify additional needs and interventions.

The use of evidence and data helped high-performing grantees use resources effectively. By relying on evidence and data to inform decision making, grantees identified their most critical needs and applied resources to activities and practices that had been shown to address those needs. The evaluation team believes that all types of Public Charter School Start-Up grantee

charter schools could benefit from adopting this practice, but new schools designated under an existing charter have an especially strong opportunity to incorporate this best practice early in their grants. By emphasizing data and evidence in early decisions, new schools designated under an existing charter can establish data collection systems that can be used for a variety of interventions in the future. This practice may be especially useful for stand-alone open-enrollment charter schools campuses, which may still be building up their data collection infrastructure and policies, although the evaluation team also expects that every school could benefit from establishing practices to collect and use data when making decisions.

### **Potential Best Practice 5: Integrating technology with the curriculum and instructional approaches helped grantees address gaps and reinforce their school models.**

The analysis of expenditure data revealed that almost all grantees used Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds for technology purchases. However, the pattern the evaluation team observed that was unique to high-performing grantees was their integration of technology with curriculum and instructional approaches.

In their survey responses, several high-performing grantees identified ways they used technology to reinforce their school's model and philosophy. For example, a Cohort I charter school campus with an emphasis on critical thinking reported that it used technology that allowed students to "manipulate data," which offered students opportunities to interact with the content of their classes. According to the school's survey response, this approach allowed students to "become the teachers in the classroom" when they report their findings. Another grantee reported that technology in its classroom was "the most unique or innovative feature" on their charter school campus and identified "interactive whiteboards" as a tool that especially supported its mission. During the site visits, the evaluation team found a similar pattern at other high-performing charter school campuses, where teachers used technology to encourage hands-on learning. When interviewed by the evaluation team, teachers explained that technology helped students engage in the classroom when it was integrated into the overall instructional approach.

Start-up grantees that serve students from low-income backgrounds have much to gain from implementing this practice. At these schools, many students do not have new technology in their homes, so the integration of technology with their curriculum can help ameliorate this disadvantage. Start-up grantees with an interdisciplinary instructional philosophy are also likely to benefit from integrating technology with their curriculum and instructional approaches. According to the survey response from one such charter school campus, which was also a high-performing grantee, it used technology to "teach integrated thematic units." Using technology this way helped teachers bridge gaps across subjects, thus helping them achieve the school's vision.

### **Potential Best Practice 6: Creating a collaborative relationship among stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents, helped improve the school culture.**

High-performing start-up grantees used the availability of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds as an opportunity to strengthen relationships among administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders (e.g., board members, community members). During site visits, stakeholders serving various functions reported that involving teachers early in the decision-making process facilitated the effective use of start-up funds. At the four high-performing charter school campuses visited, all teachers, administrators, and board members reported substantial teacher roles in purchasing decisions. For example, at each site, teachers said that they were able to select professional development opportunities they believed would be useful and that administrators were supportive of their requests. Similarly, teachers said that they were consulted on decisions about materials and equipment purchased.

In addition to consultations between teachers and administrators, the evaluation team also found that high-performing grantees obtained buy-in from parents, the school board, and the general community. For example, one high-performing school held monthly community meetings where parents and other community members could voice their opinions about the school's role in the community. These meetings allowed parents to express their preferences for class options and extracurricular programs and allowed administrators and teachers to explain how their vision for the grant fit with broader community goals.

Grantees that built a collaborative environment around the use of grant funds laid a foundation for cooperation about other issues. Though it is too early to predict how schools will react to more difficult decisions in the future, it is likely that schools who established a collaborative environment will better handle challenges when they occur.

## **Conclusion**

The best practices identified in this chapter show how high-performing Public Charter School Start-Up grantees established strong foundations during the early stages of their grant. The diverse missions and contexts of these charter school campuses meant that these best practices took various forms, but they also shared some common attributes. First, the potential best practices identified in this report demonstrate the value of cooperation, both within a charter school campus and across stakeholders in the community. This cooperation may include building support networks with outside experts, maintaining lines of communications with TEA, and consulting with teachers and parents about curriculum and instructional methods. Second, these potential best practices show deliberate decision making about a range of topics, including what interventions to select, what topics should be the focus of professional development, how to spend Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, and where technology can be most effective. Finally, the potential best practices exemplify a student-focused approach to education, through emphasis on positive school culture, new technology, and validated interventions.

The potential best practices described in this section show how high-performing charter school campuses from Cohorts I and II have implemented their Public Charter School Start-Up Grants.

The evaluation team recognizes that subsequent cohorts will likely also have successful grantees and that analysis of their practices will reveal additional best practices. Even though the potential best practices described here should be considered preliminary, they also offer lessons learned that later cohorts can use to improve and refine their practices. This chapter therefore contributes to the overall evaluation by identifying potential best practices that may form the basis for a final analysis of what works well in spending start-up grant funds to plan for and implement start-up of new Texas charter schools.

## Chapter 3: Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to present initial findings for the ongoing evaluation of TEA's Public Charter School Start-Up Grant program that will conclude August 31, 2017. Findings presented in this report focused on Research Questions 1 and 2 for Cohorts I and II. Qualitative and quantitative data had been gathered from multiple sources to document and understand charter school planning, initial implementation, and potential best practices in how grantees used Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. Major findings are highlighted in the following summary, and key takeaways are presented, followed by a discussion of next steps.

### Summary of Findings

#### Use of Public Charter School Start-Up Funds

##### **Research Question 1: In what specific ways do grantees use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds?**

Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees' use of funds for planning and implementation of programs was examined for trends across cohorts and charter types. The findings were based primarily on two data sources—the Expenditure Data and the Expenditure Survey—each of which yielded different types of data. The Expenditure Data provided a broad overview of grantee spending, and the Expenditure Survey was developed to obtain more specific information on products and services within more general expenditure categories where grantees might be spending funds. Grant application amendments were also reviewed and served as a supplementary source.

**Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee spending through September 30, 2014 revealed that needs had not changed drastically across Cohorts I and II (between 2011 and 2014), and charter type did not connote a particular spending pattern for planning and implementation of programs.** On the basis of findings from the analysis of the Expenditure Data, no cohort-wide patterns were found in grantee spending, although some evidence of differences in spending by charter type was apparent. For example, grantees in both Cohorts I and II exhibited similar patterns of spending, with most spending all of the grant funds that they were awarded. When the breakdown of grantee spending between the planning and the implementation phases was examined, results were more varied. Although Cohort I grantees spent a greater proportion of their funds on planning while Cohort II grantees spent more during implementation, the large degree of variation within each cohort presents no clear pattern. In addition, no patterns emerged based on charter type for spending during planning versus implementation activities.

**No cohort-based patterns were found in grantee spending by expenditure category, but Public Charter School Start-Up Grant spending by expenditure category was related to charter type.** An analysis of Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee spending by expenditure category using the Expenditure Data also revealed no cohort-wide pattern, as the greater spending by Cohort I grantees on capital outlay items could be attributed to the spending

activities of the three campus charter schools within the cohort, suggesting that spending differences existed according to charter type. When spending by charter type was examined, the evaluation team found that new open-enrollment charter schools distributed spending more evenly across the different expenditure categories, perhaps due to operating more independently than other charter types.

**Spending by Cohort I grantees exhibited a pattern of being distributed more widely across expenditure categories, both for general funds from other sources and for Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, compared to that of Cohort II.** Findings from the Expenditure Survey provided a more nuanced picture of specific products and services within expenditure categories obtained through Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds. Spending differences by charter type were more apparent through this data source, and a difference in spending by cohort was also found. Specifically, almost all Cohort I grantees spent funds on each of the expenditure categories,<sup>11</sup> whereas Cohort II grantee spending was more focused on select categories: instructional programs and materials, school facilities and equipment, and staffing. This pattern held when grantees were asked to indicate for which expenditure categories Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds had specifically been used. Thus, results from the Expenditure Survey showed a difference between cohorts in spending.

**Analysis of Expenditure Data suggested that a pattern in spending differences across expenditure categories existed based on charter school type.** When Public Charter School Start-Up Grant spending across expenditure categories was examined across charter type based on the Expenditure Survey, there was consistency across charter types in the spending of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds on instructional programs and materials and staffing. However, new schools designated under an existing charter were less likely to spend funds on school facilities and equipment or on professional development.

**Patterns in spending on individual products and services may be more attributable to charter type, rather than cohort, adding evidence to the conclusion that grantees with different charter types spent grant funds differently.** A closer look at Public Charter School Start-Up Grant spending on individual products and services using Expenditure Survey responses indicated that spending across cohorts was similar in some areas (e.g., classroom furniture, classroom technology hardware, textbooks and other instructional supplies) and varied in others. Specifically, a greater proportion of Cohort II grantees spent grant funds on salaries and incentives for principals, and a greater proportion of Cohort I grantees spent grant funds on curriculum development. However, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these differences can be attributed to cohort versus charter type, in that each cohort consisted of multiple charter types. Looking closer at grantee spending by charter type on individual products and services, grantees operating open-enrollment charter schools spent funds across a broader array of products and services than new schools designated under an existing charter and campus charter school grantees. Analysis of data from future cohorts will determine if this pattern continues to exist.

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<sup>11</sup> The five expenditure categories were: payroll, professional and contract services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, capital outlay items, and indirect costs.

## Potential Grantee Best Practices

### Research Question 2: What best practices can be identified in how grantees use funds?

Chapter 1 provided a descriptive overview of how Public Charter School Start-Up Grantees used funds. Chapter 2 built on these findings by examining the most effective ways in which grantees have used Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds for planning and implementation of new charter school campuses. The analysis for Chapter 2 focused on grantees that have already demonstrated early evidence of student success, in order to highlight practices in grant spending that work potentially well among high-performing grantees.

A subset of nine grantees across both cohorts was identified as high performing, based on multiple criteria. Findings were drawn from all grantees in this subset, but particularly from the four grantees that participated in site visits. Data sources used included interviews and focus groups conducted during the site visits, the Expenditure Data, the Expenditure Survey, budget amendments, and stakeholder surveys.

Six best practices were identified as a result of data analysis and are listed below. Although these best practices are based on preliminary findings from two cohorts, some implications can be drawn.

**Spending Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to establish and support school culture and climate helped foster engagement and ownership.** Having a clear vision from the outset of the school culture and climate that will be promoted and then devoting a proportion of funds to making this vision apparent for students, teachers, and others in the school community helped foster engagement and ownership.

**Building a diverse support network, specifically to assist with a variety of processes, including finance, business management, and compliance with TEA guidelines helped with effective start-up implementation.** Recognizing aspects of program development and implementation where support might be needed to build a more effective program is crucial. This strategy can make tasks seem less insurmountable, especially if guidance from experts or from those experienced in a particular area allows grantees to focus energy on other key areas that need attention.

**Demonstrating flexibility in planning and use of funds throughout the grant period helped grantees with implementation; an important consideration for this practice was maintaining the overall vision for the charter, while being open to changes.** Successful grantees will need to exhibit some degree of flexibility in implementation and in how funds are used to strike a delicate balance between reinforcing a school vision established at the onset and being open to important adjustments that may emerge over time. Of equal importance is the implementation modification process; specifically, who is involved in decision making, and what data are used to prompt changes in implementation. Two aspects of the best practice of flexibility in use of funds were prevalent across grantees. First, budget revisions were carefully considered through deliberate processes such as needs assessments. Second, changes proposed through amendments did not alter, but instead enhanced, the overall vision.



**High-performing start-up grantees used evidence to inform practice, particularly in making decisions about policies, activities, and purchases.** Relying on evidence from assessments and other data sources can help inform grantees of what is working and where improvements are needed, thus helping to target instructional and management approaches. This best practice speaks again to a process of continuous improvement and refinement, based on feedback from stakeholders and student needs.

**Integrating technology with curriculum and instructional approaches helped grantees address gaps and reinforce their school models.** This best practice goes further than simply having technology available. By closely and thoughtfully integrating technology with the overall instructional approach, gaps across subject areas can be addressed and the school model can be reinforced for teachers and students. Implementation of this best practice can have important benefits for low-income students, who may have less access to technology outside of the school environment. In addition, overall student engagement can be improved by appropriate technology integration.

**Creating a collaborative relationship among stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and parents helped improve the school culture.** Involving teachers and other stakeholders in decision making encourages a collective school culture and buy-in from staff.

Throughout the best practices described, a recurring theme of fostering a collaborative environment is apparent. Being open to feedback from experts, teachers, and parents is important for improvement of processes and better outcomes. By involving stakeholders, a community of individuals invested in the charter school's success is established, and students benefit from an environment shaped to their learning needs.

## Next Steps

To further address Research Question 1, the final report will include descriptive analyses similar to those provided in Chapter 1 of this report. The inclusion of data from additional grantees will allow ICF to investigate if patterns identified in this report continue to hold as more grantees are added to the analysis sample and to assess how grant funds are being spent differently by Cohorts III and IV and what might be the reasons for these differences.

To continue to address Research Question 2, the final report will include site visit data from five additional grantees from Cohort III. These additional data will allow ICF to better understand the extent to which best practices identified in this report are being implemented by grantees and whether any practices are being implemented in new and innovative ways. The additional site visit data will also allow ICF to use to confirm whether practices identified in this report are truly effective and to identify any additional best practices that may emerge.

In the final report, Research Questions 3, 4, 5, and 6 will also be addressed, focusing on outcomes of students in grantee schools. Each question is stated below, followed by a brief description of how it will be answered.

*Research Question 3: Within high-performing charter schools, to what extent do student outcomes differ by charter school type, mission, or focus?*

At this stage of the evaluation, nine grantees from Cohort I and II have been identified as showing early evidence of success on student outcomes. As more data are collected on these grantees, as well as new grantees, additional analyses will be conducted to confirm whether these grantees are, in fact, sustaining as high-performing grantees. A comparative analysis of those grantees that are confirmed as high performing will be conducted. Outcomes to be examined include student achievement in mathematics and reading, attendance, leaving school, and graduation (where applicable).

*Research Question 4: To what extent do student and school outcomes differ between high-performing charter schools and traditional neighborhood schools?*

A matched comparison group of students in traditional neighborhood public schools will be identified for the sample of students enrolled at high-performing charter school campuses. The matched group will be selected on the basis of several criteria, including the school students would have attended if they had not attended the charter school, race/ethnicity, gender, and prior achievement. Academic performance in mathematics and reading, as measured by state standardized assessments, will be compared for students enrolled at high-performing charter school campuses versus traditional neighborhood schools. In addition, the evaluation team will compare attendance, leaving school, and graduation (where applicable) for high-performing charter schools and traditional neighborhood schools.

*Research Question 5: To what extent do student and school outcomes differ between charter schools approved and funded through the 2010–2015 competitive grant process and those approved for noncompetitive funding in 2010–2011 and prior to that time?*

To address this question, student outcomes in new competitively funded charter school campuses will be compared to student outcomes in noncompetitively funded charter school campuses. Public Charter School Start-Up grantees from Cohorts I and II will be included in the analysis for Research Question 5, whereas Research Questions 3 and 4 will focus solely on high-performing schools.

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# **Appendix A: Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Descriptions**

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## Appendix A: Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Descriptions

**Table A1. Description of Cohort I and II Charter School Start-up Grant Recipients (n = 28)**

Charter School Name and Charter Holder Organization	Target Area for 2012–13	Charter Type	Projected Enrollment and Grades Served in Year 1	Number of Students Served from Schools “In Need of Improvement”*	Projected Staff Members in Year 1
<b>Cohort I Grantees (n=11)</b>					
<b>Arrow Academy</b> Leadership Education Foundation	Houston and Bryan areas	Open-enrollment	1,000 students Grades K–12	45 students Grades 6–8	45
<b>Compass Academy</b> Compass Academy	Ector County area	Open-enrollment	476 students Grades K–4	9 students Grades K–2	19
<b>Highland Park Critical Thinking Campus</b> San Antonio ISD	San Antonio area	Campus charter	801 students Grades PK–5	0 students	80
<b>Infinity Preparatory Middle School</b> Uplift Education	Irving area	New school under existing open-enrollment charter	450 students Grades 6–8	0 students	10
<b>Leadership Prep School</b> Leadership Prep School	Frisco area	Open-enrollment	350 students Grades K–6	0 students	15
<b>Newman International Academy of Arlington</b> Newman International Academy	Arlington area	Open-enrollment	750 students Grades PK–11	190 students Grades PK–9	28
<b>Pinnacle Preparatory Academy</b> Uplift Education	Dallas area	New school under existing open-enrollment charter	286 students Grades K–3	15 students Grades K–1	8
<b>Premier Learning Academy</b> Premier Learning Academy, Inc.	LaMarque area	Open-enrollment	560 students Grades K–12	0 students	24
<b>Rhodes Technology and Media Charter School</b> San Antonio ISD	San Antonio area	Campus charter	821 students Grades 6–8	370 students Grades 6–8	80

Charter School Name and Charter Holder Organization	Target Area for 2012–13	Charter Type	Projected Enrollment and Grades Served in Year 1	Number of Students Served from Schools “In Need of Improvement”*	Projected Staff Members in Year 1
<b>Travis Early College High School</b> San Antonio ISD	San Antonio area	Campus charter	450 students Grades 9–12	120 students Grades 9–12	18
<b>William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity (WALIPP) Preparatory Academy</b> WALIPP	Houston area	Open-enrollment	550 students Grades 6–10	37 students Grades 6–8	16
<b>Cohort II Grantees (n=17)</b>					
<b>Austin Achieve Public Schools</b> Austin Achieve Public Schools, Inc.	Austin area	Open-enrollment	150 students Grade 6	50 students	10
<b>Champions Academy</b> Responsive Education Solutions	Houston area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	54 students Grades PK-1	6 students	24
<b>Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy</b> Fallbrook Community Development Center	Aldine, Klein, and Spring areas	Open-enrollment	452 students Grades K-5	0 students	35
<b>The Founders Classical Academy</b> Responsive Education Solutions	Dallas area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	346 students Grades K-10	92 students	34
<b>Global Learning Village</b> Hope Academy, Inc.	Houston area	Open-enrollment	176 students Grades K-1	10 students	17
<b>Houston Gateway Academy, Elite Academy</b> Houston Gateway Academy, Inc.	Houston area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	600 students Grades PK-12	600 students	45
<b>UT Tyler Innovation Academy</b> The University of Texas System	Longview, Tyler, and Palestine areas	University charter school	360 students Grades 3-6	36 students	22

Charter School Name and Charter Holder Organization	Target Area for 2012–13	Charter Type	Projected Enrollment and Grades Served in Year 1	Number of Students Served from Schools “In Need of Improvement”*	Projected Staff Members in Year 1
<b>KIPP Coastal Village Middle</b> Galveston ISD	Galveston area	Campus charter	175 students Grades 5-7	175 students	10
<b>Laureate Prep. Secondary School</b> Uplift Education	Dallas area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	225 students Grades 6-7, 9	10 students	21
<b>Legacy Preparatory Academy</b> Legacy Preparatory Academy	Dallas, Mesquite, and Richardson areas	Open-enrollment	1,200 students Grades K-4, 7	10 students	48
<b>The Media Arts Academy</b> Responsive Education Solutions	Dallas area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	130 students Grades 9-12	13 students	12
<b>Prime Prep Academy</b> Uplift Fort Worth, CDC	Dallas and Fort Worth areas	Open-enrollment	1,500 students Grades K-12	430 students	66
<b>The REAL Learning Academy</b> Eden Park Academy	Austin, Bastrop, and Del Valle areas	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	260 students Grades PK-2	260 students	25
<b>UME Preparatory Academy</b> UMEP, Inc.	Birdville, Cedar Hill, Dallas, Fort Worth, Grand Prairie, and Maypearl areas	Open-enrollment	352 students Grades K-8	211 students	50
<b>Uplift Meridian Preparatory</b> Uplift Education	Fort Worth area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	282 students Grades K-1, 6-7	55 students	27

Charter School Name and Charter Holder Organization	Target Area for 2012–13	Charter Type	Projected Enrollment and Grades Served in Year 1	Number of Students Served from Schools “In Need of Improvement”*	Projected Staff Members in Year 1
<b>Uplift Mighty Preparatory</b> Uplift Education	Fort Worth area	New school designation under an existing open-enrollment charter	176 students Grades K-2	15 students	21

Source: Texas Education Agency, 2011–2012 and 2012–14 Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Applications

\*Schools identified as “in need of improvement” are those that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the same content area for two or more years in a row. Grantees were only asked to list this information for Year 1.



# **Appendix B: Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Evaluation Methodology**

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## Appendix B: Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Evaluation Methodology

ICF's evaluation activities during this reporting period were designed to address two research questions:

- Research Question 1: In what specific ways do grantees use Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds?
- Research Question 2: What best practices can be identified in how grantees use funds?

ICF used a mixed methods approach to address these two questions. This approach included quantitative analyses of charter school campus budgets and expenditures, qualitative analyses of data gathered from site visit interviews and focus groups, and analyses of stakeholder surveys. The use of multiple methods to address the research questions allowed for the triangulation of results across data sources. This appendix presents a brief summary of the analytic approaches used.

### Analysis of Charter School Budgets and Budget Amendments

As a part of grantees' application to the Texas Education Agency for Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funding, each grantee had provided a budget detailing how they planned to spend awarded funds. Additionally, TEA allows grantees to submit amendments to their original budgets up to 90 days before the end of a grant period.

Expenditures were explicitly authorized to support the following overarching activities:

- Planning and design of the educational program,
- Professional development of teachers and other staff who will work in the charter school, and
- Initial implementation of the charter.

For the evaluation, TEA provided ICF with copies of the applications from Cohort I and Cohort II Public Charter School Start-Up grantees and any grant application amendments that were submitted during the grant period. ICF examined the original and any amended grant budgets and summarized how grantees planned to use funds across various expenditure categories.

### Analysis of Charter School Expenditures

ICF's analysis of expenditures consisted of a review of data from the sources highlighted below.

#### Public Charter School Start-Up Grantee Expenditure Data (Expenditure Data).

Reimbursement requests for the Public Charter School Start-Up grant expenditures are tracked in TEA's grantee expenditure database. TEA sent ICF Expenditure Data for Cohort I grantees from the time of the grant award, April 1, 2011, until November 30, 2012, and for Cohort II grantees from the time of the grant award, May 1, 2012 until September 30, 2014. These data were used to examine how grantees spent Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds to conduct start-up planning and implementation activities during those time periods.

**Public Charter School Start-Up Grant Expenditure Survey (Expenditure Survey).** The Expenditure Survey was administered to grantees once during the life of their Public Charter School Start-Up Grant. Cohort I grantees completed their survey in spring 2012, and Cohort II grantees completed their survey in spring 2013. The purpose of the survey was to gain a more detailed understanding of the specific products and services on which charter school campuses spent funds, beyond the broader categories included in the data retrieved from TEA's grantee expenditure database.

The survey was designed by ICF as an Excel form and emailed to the administrator at each charter school campus. The administrator was asked to forward the survey to the appropriate staff person (e.g., business manager) for completion.

### **Analysis of Survey Data**

The evaluation team surveyed teachers, administrators, and charter holder board members at each Cohort I and II charter school campus. Surveys for each of the three stakeholder groups were developed by the evaluation team. Each charter school campus was asked to complete these surveys once during the life of its Public Charter School Start-Up Grant, in the spring of the school year in which it was first awarded funding. The data gathered through these surveys were used to help understand grantees' decision making related to the use of grant funds and to identify potential best practices in grantees' use of funds.

**Teacher Survey.** Teachers were surveyed to gain insight into the role that they played during the grant period in decision making about their charter school campus facility, school operations, school planning and support, school staffing, teacher professional development, instructional approach and curriculum, and technology. TEA contacted the administrator at each Cohort I and II charter school campus and obtained his or her teachers' email addresses. TEA provided this information to the ICF team, and the team then emailed the teachers at each charter school campus, provided them with the survey website address, and requested that they complete the survey.

**Administrator Survey.** Administrators were surveyed to obtain their perspective on how decisions were made at their charter school campus during the grant period and, in particular, who the key decision makers were for issues pertaining to the charter school campus facility, school operations, school planning and support, school staffing, teacher professional development, instructional approach and curriculum, and technology. The administrator at each Cohort I and Cohort II charter school campus was sent a link to complete the survey online and a PDF copy of the instrument. One survey was to be returned from each charter school campus, with the survey designed to be completed by an administrator at that campus. However, administrators were instructed that they could obtain input from other school leadership staff as needed if they did not have all the information they needed to complete the survey.

**Board Member Survey.** Board members were surveyed to better understand the structure and function of the charter holder board, and its role in decision making and supporting charter school campus functions and operations during the grant period. Each charter school campus administrator received an email that included a link to complete the survey online and a PDF copy of the survey. The administrator was asked to forward the email to the charter holder's

board president. One survey was to be returned from each campus. However, board members could collaborate with one another to complete the survey.

### **Charter School Campus Site Visits**

Charter school campus site visits were conducted by a two-person team from ICF. The team scheduled one-day visits to each charter school campus, during which they conducted interviews with school administrators and charter school board members, as well as focus groups with teachers. ICF developed interview and focus group protocols for each stakeholder group that were aligned with the four site visit goals:

1. Build upon the evaluation data collected on four Public Charter School Start-Up grantees showing early evidence of success on student outcomes to understand how and why these charter school campuses have used start-up grant funds to support their missions;
2. Gain a more detailed understanding of the decision-making processes related to allocating Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds, including how these processes have changed over time;
3. Identify promising and innovative practices in the use of Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funds that contribute to the success of these charter school campuses; and
4. Identify which TEA policies and practices these four charter school campuses have implemented to learn how these policies and practices have supported the creation of high-quality charter school campuses and to determine if TEA could support charter school campuses in other ways.

Site visits were conducted at four campuses between May 2 and May 8, 2014. Charter school campuses were selected on the basis of their identification as showing early evidence of success. Charter school campuses showing early evidence of success were those that

- received a Met Standard accountability rating from TEA for the 2012–13 school year
- achieved an attendance rate of 95% or higher, and
- obtained at least one academic achievement distinction or had a System Safeguard score of 100% in the 2013 accountability ratings.<sup>12</sup>

Nine charter school campuses met these criteria. Purposive sampling was conducted among these nine charter school campuses to select four to participate in the site visit. The purposive

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<sup>12</sup> Distinction designations recognize outstanding academic achievement in reading/English language arts and mathematics on various indicators of postsecondary readiness. Campuses that received an accountability rating of Met Standard were eligible for the following distinction designations in 2013: Top 25% Progress, Academic Achievement in Reading/English Language Arts, and Academic Achievement in Mathematics. Please see [Explanation of the 2013 Accountability Summary Report \(https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2013/summary\\_explanation.pdf\)](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/account/2013/summary_explanation.pdf) for additional information. The system safeguard measures are calculated within the state accountability system to meet federal accountability reporting requirements for the purpose of identifying Priority and Focus schools. These campuses are then subject to federally-prescribed interventions based on the performance of individual student groups. A system safeguard score of 100% indicates that all groups measured for a campus met or exceeded the performance rate targets set for a particular group.

sample was designed so that a diverse sample of charter school campuses could be visited (i.e., different charter types, grade levels, demographics). The group of site visit charter school campuses comprised of one Cohort I grantee and three Cohort II grantees.

**Teachers.** The charter school campus administrator was asked to identify teachers to participate in the focus groups. Although all teachers employed at the charter school campus were eligible to participate, the school contact was asked to intentionally invite teachers who were active in the early stages of charter school campus planning and start-up. The length of each focus group was between 45 and 60 minutes, and at the start of each session, teachers were asked to sign an informed consent statement.

**Administrators.** One or more administrators were interviewed at each charter school campus, including the administrator who completed the administrator survey (see Analysis of Survey Data section). The interview with this administrator occurred prior to any other site visit activities. Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and administrators were asked to sign an informed consent statement prior to the start of the interview.

**Board Representative.** One or more charter holder board representatives were interviewed at each charter school campus, including the representative who completed the board member survey (see Analysis of Survey Data section). Each interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, and board representatives were asked to provide informed consent prior to the start of the interview.

# Appendix C: Grantee Dashboards

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## Appendix C: Grantee Dashboards

ICF created one-page summaries or dashboards that describe key features of each of the Public Charter School Start-Up grantees, including the year the charter school campus was opened, grade levels served, geographic areas served, demographics of student population, financial data, and student achievement data. One dashboard was prepared for each grantee, so in cases where a grantee opened multiple charter school campuses (e.g., Arrow Academy), these data were combined across all its charter school campuses.

A brief overview of each section of the dashboard and its associated data sources is provided below.

**Grantee Overview Information.** This section includes the year in which the charter school campus was opened, the grades served, the geographic areas served, the charter holder and the grantee's relationship with that charter holder, and a summary of the school mission/vision. This information was obtained from a review of each grantee's application and also a review of charter school campus websites.

**Grantee Demographic Information.** This section includes actual student enrollment numbers for each year the school has been opened up until the 2012–13 school year. It also includes demographic data, such as the percentage of students who are a part of a number of racial/ethnic groups and the percentage of students who are part of special categories (e.g., economically disadvantaged, limited English proficiency, receiving special education services). All data in this section were obtained from the [2012–13 TEA School Report Cards](https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/src/2013/campus.srch.html) (<https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/src/2013/campus.srch.html>).

**Grantee Achievement Data.** This section provides a chart that compares the percentage of students proficient on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) in reading and mathematics in a particular charter school campus to statewide numbers. These data are provided for the 2011–12 and 2012–13 school years. All data in this section were obtained from the 2011–12 and 2012–13 TEA School Report Cards. Because STAAR is not administered to students below Grade 3, charter school campuses that had students only in Grade K through 2 do not have this information on their dashboards (i.e., Compass Academy, Pinnacle Preparatory Academy, Uplift Meridian Preparatory).

**Grantee Financial Data.** This section provides information on a grantee's budgets and expenditures. Each grantee's original budget for grant funds was obtained from its application to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for Public Charter School Start-Up Grant funding. Grantee final expenditure data were obtained from TEA's grantee expenditure data, provided to ICF by TEA.

## Cohort I

### Arrow Academy (AA)

2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Current Grades:** K–8

**Charter Holder:** Leadership Education Foundation

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Brazosport, Bryan, Dallas, and Houston areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The campus reports to the charter holder, but retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To give all students the opportunity to access knowledge and acquire the skills to become contributing, responsible citizens within our society. All students should develop the passion to be a lifelong learner.

#### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	574	K–8
2012–13:	656	K–8

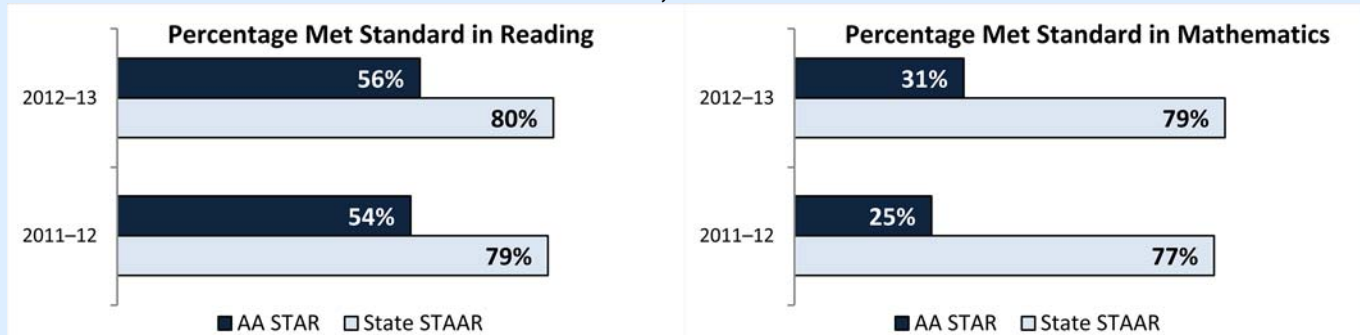
#### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	75%
English Language Learners:	4%
Special Education:	5%

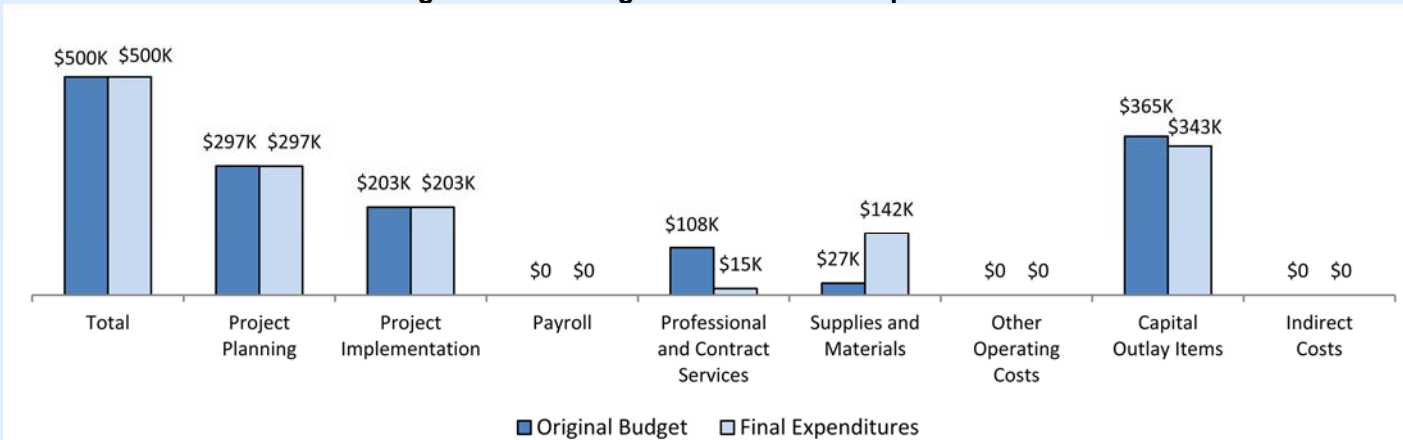
#### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	<1%	White:	3%
Black:	81%	Other:	1%
Hispanic:	15%		

#### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. AA



#### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.



## Compass Academy (CA)

2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Current Grades:** K–3

**Charter Holder:** Compass Academy

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Ector County and Midland areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The campus reports to the charter holder, but retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To prepare all students to be college-work-life leaders through developing rigorous and relevant curriculum based on positive relationships and innovative learning opportunities.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	250	K–2
2012–13:	373	K–3

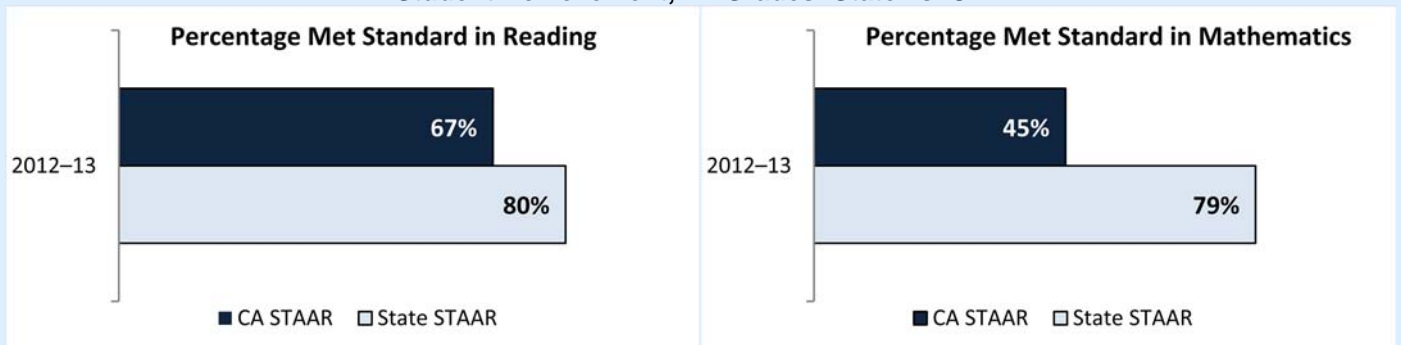
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	30%
English Language Learners:	<1%
Special Education:	4%

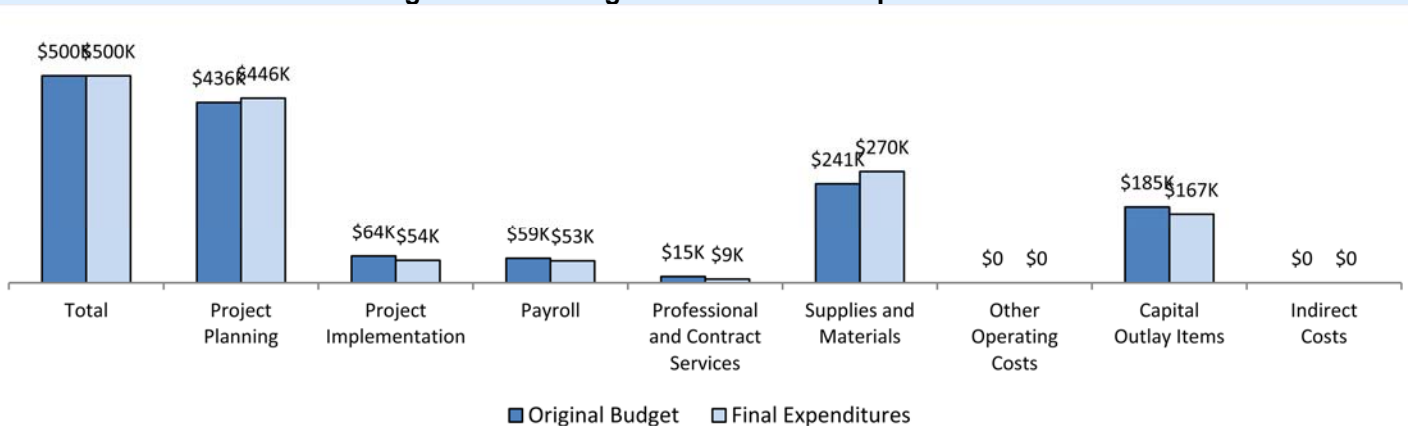
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	<1%	White:	64%
Black:	2%	Other:	1%
Hispanic:	32%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. CA\*\*



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Compass Academy does not have student achievement data for the 2011–12 School Year as students in grades K–2 do not participate in the state assessments (STAAR).

\*\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Highland Park Critical Thinking Campus (HPCTC)

2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Campus Charter

**Current Grades:** PK–5

**Charter Holder:** San Antonio ISD (SAISD)

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** San Antonio area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** SAISD has overall policy-setting and enforcing authority. The Campus Leadership Team makes day-to-day decisions.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To transform SAISD into a national model urban school district where every child graduates and is educated so that he or she is prepared to be a contributing member of the community.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	760	PK-5
2012–13:	715	PK-5

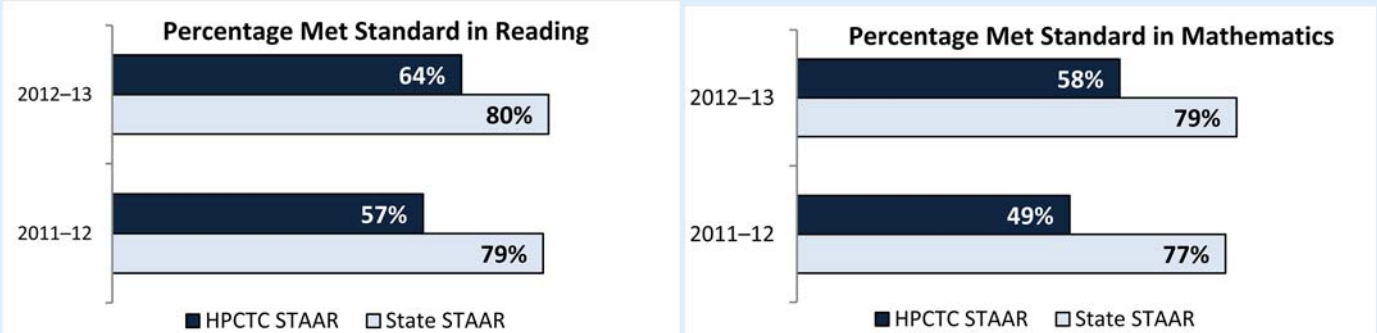
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	96%
English Language Learners:	20%
Special Education:	7%

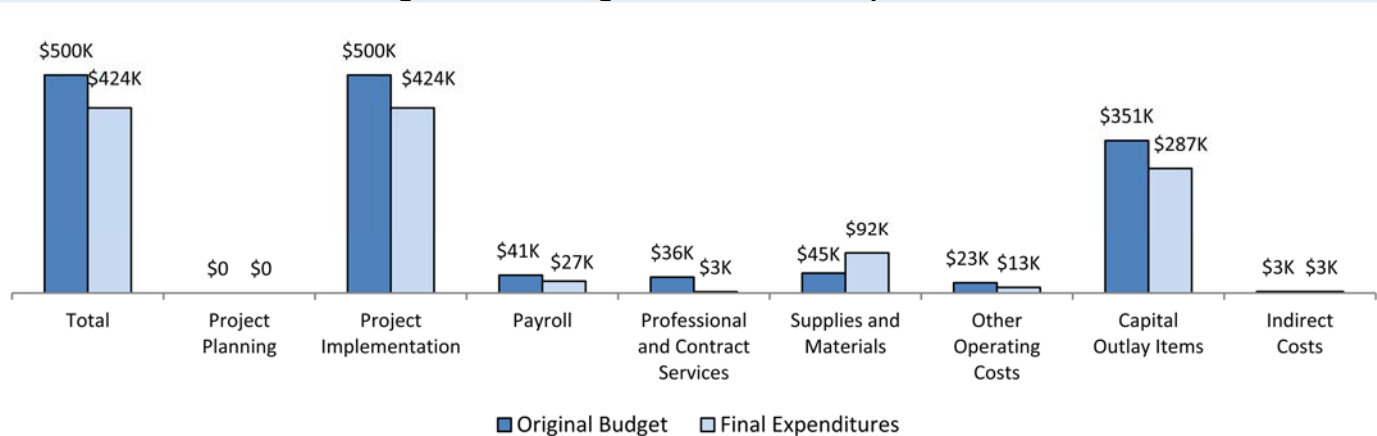
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	0%	White:	2%
Black:	2%	Other:	<1%
Hispanic:	95%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. HPCTC



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Infinity Preparatory Middle School (IPMS)

## 2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Current Grades:** 6–7

**Charter Holder:** Uplift Education

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Irving area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The campus reports to the charter holder, but retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To empower students to reach their highest potential and inspire a lifelong love of learning, achievement, service, and responsible citizenship. Our goal is to close the achievement gap and ensure 100% of students graduate and enroll in college.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	123	6
2012–13:	269	6–7

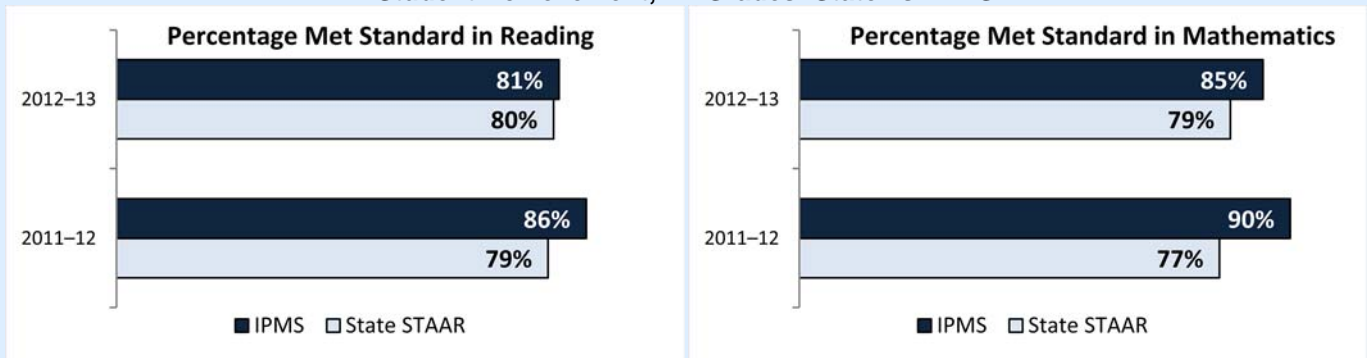
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	79%
Limited English Proficient:	37%
Special Education:	5%

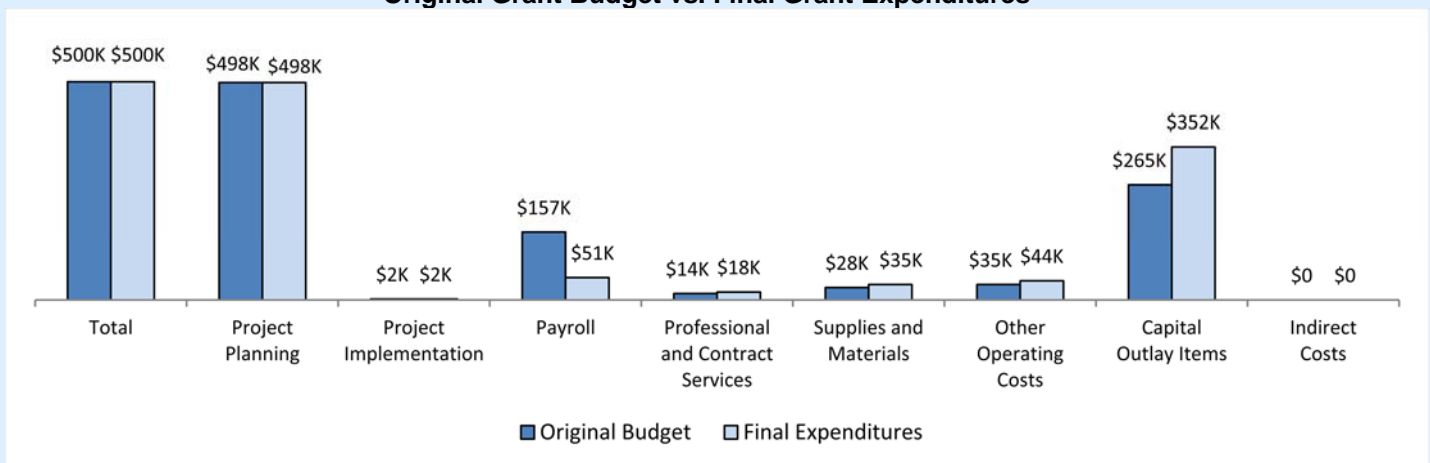
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	3%	White:	8%
Black:	2%	Other:	2%
Hispanic:	85%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. IPMS



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Leadership Prep School (LPS)

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Current Grades:** K–5

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Frisco area

## 2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Charter Holder:** Leadership Prep School

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** LPS is its own Local Education Agency.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To focus on five key areas: parent partnership, leadership development, academics, creativity, and excellence.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	250	K–4
2012–13:	350	K–5

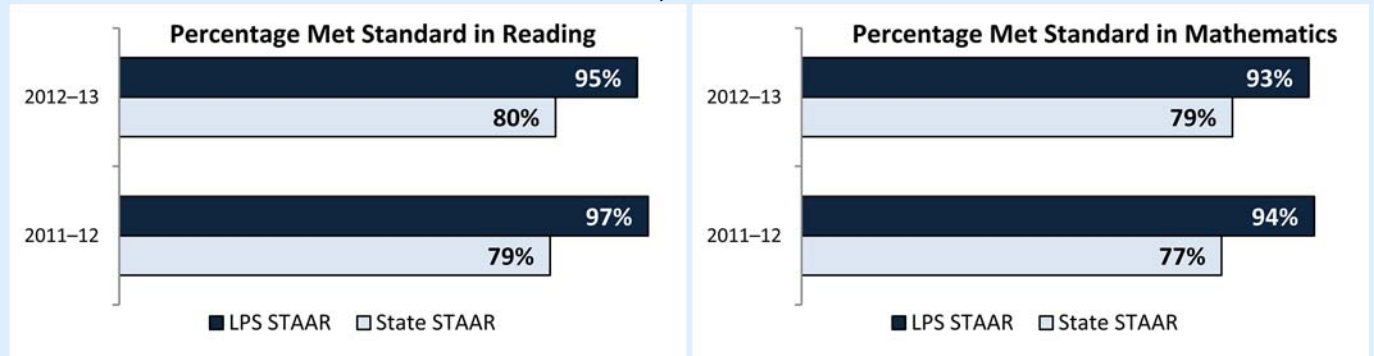
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	5%
English Language Learners:	10%
Special Education:	2%

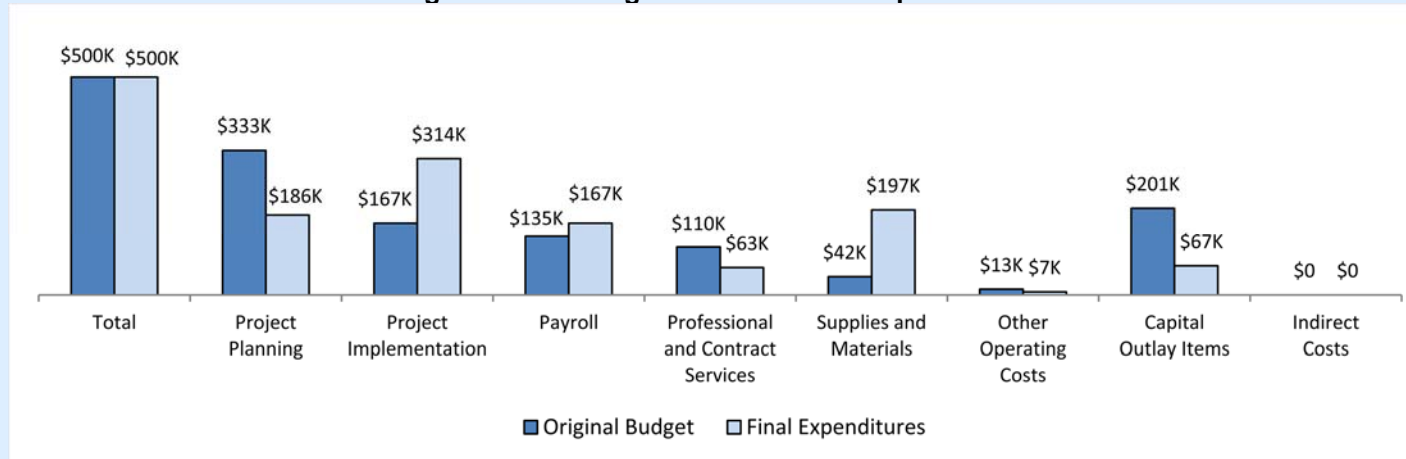
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	45%	White:	34%
Black:	7%	Other:	4%
Hispanic:	10%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. LPS



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Newman International Academy of Arlington (NIA)

2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Current Grades:** PK–10

**Charter Holder:** Newman International Academy

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Fort Worth, Arlington, Lancaster, Everman, Duncanville, Carrollton-Farmers Branch, and Dallas areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The campus reports to the charter holder, but retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To deliver personalized educational experiences in a disciplined, nurturing, and character-building environment facilitated by partnerships between faculty, students, parents, and community.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	330	PK–9
2012–13:	475	PK–10

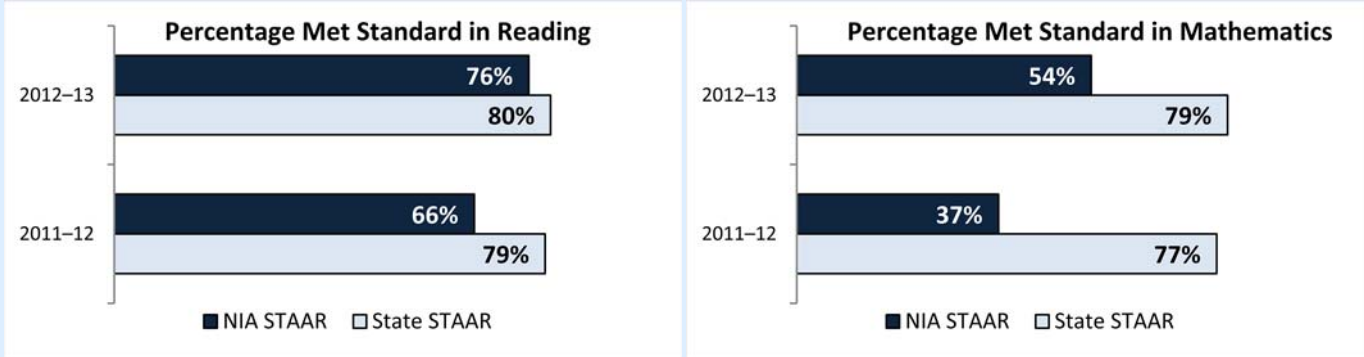
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	55%
English Language Learners:	3%
Special Education:	6%

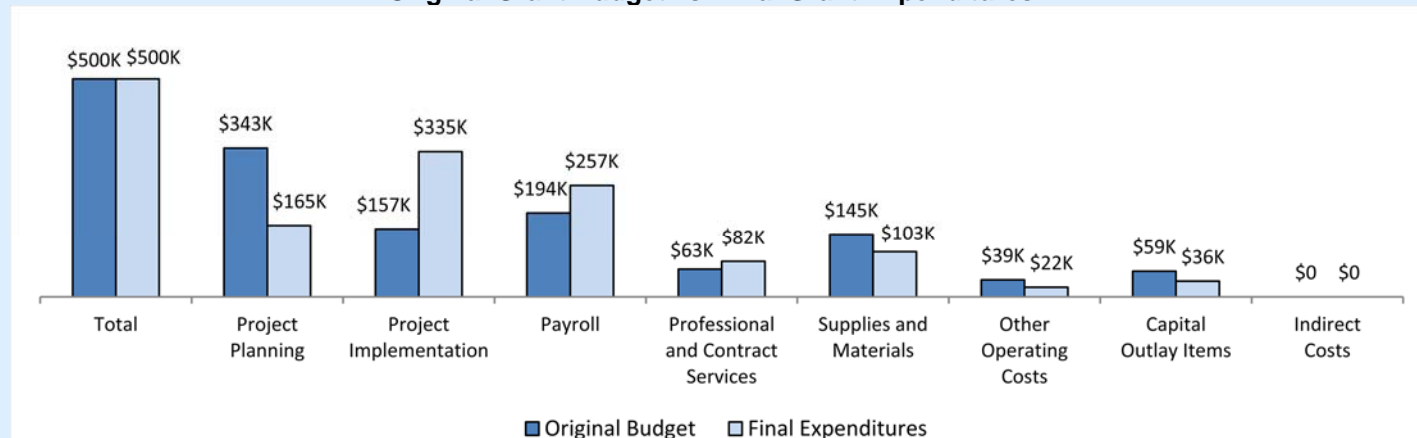
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	5%	White:	36%
Black:	35%	Other:	4%
Hispanic:	20%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. NIA



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Premier Learning Academy (PLA)

## 2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Current Grades:** K–12

**Charter Holder:** Premier Learning Academy, Inc.

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Dallas area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** PLA, Inc. is its own Local Education Agency.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide a nurturing educational experience with a strong emphasis on technology-based learning, real world experiences, and character development.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	357	K–12
2012–13:	362	K–12

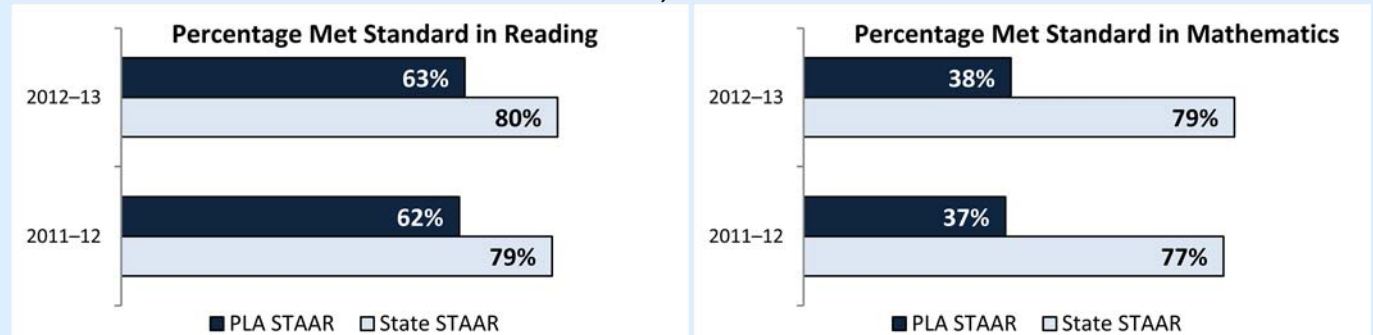
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	73%
English Language Learners	7%
Special Education:	8%

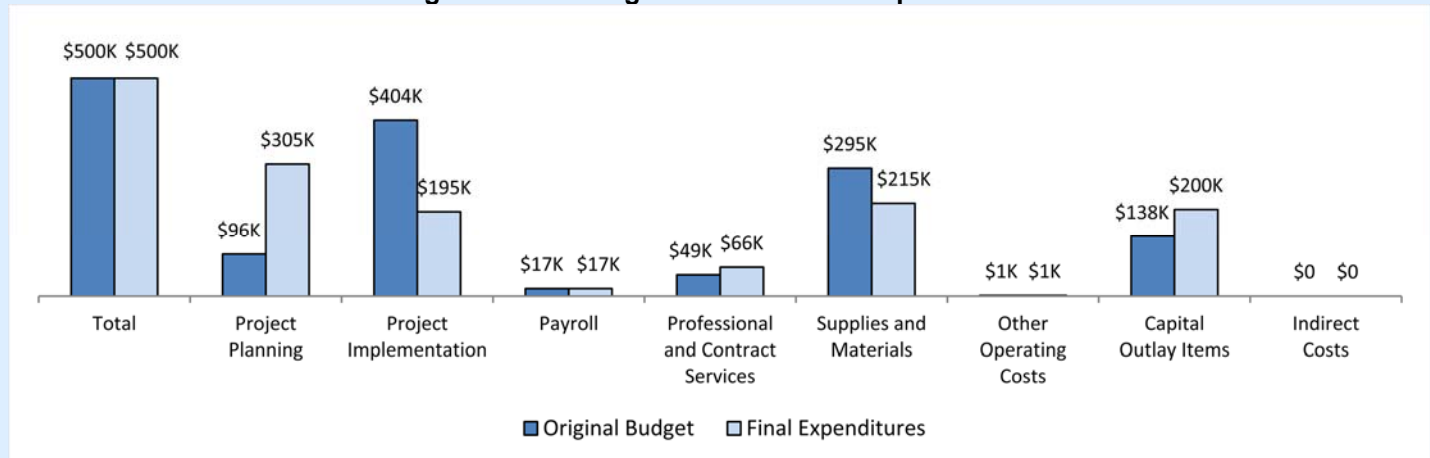
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	<1%	White:	22%
Black:	49%	Other:	2%
Hispanic:	26%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. PLA



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Pinnacle Preparatory Academy (PPA)

2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Current Grades:** K–2

**Charter Holder:** Uplift Education

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** LaMarque area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The campus reports to the charter holder, but retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To offer a learning environment that encourages high expectations for success. At its core, the school is safe, embraces, diversity, and expects high ethical standards.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	98	K–1
2012–13:	259	K–2

### Special Categories

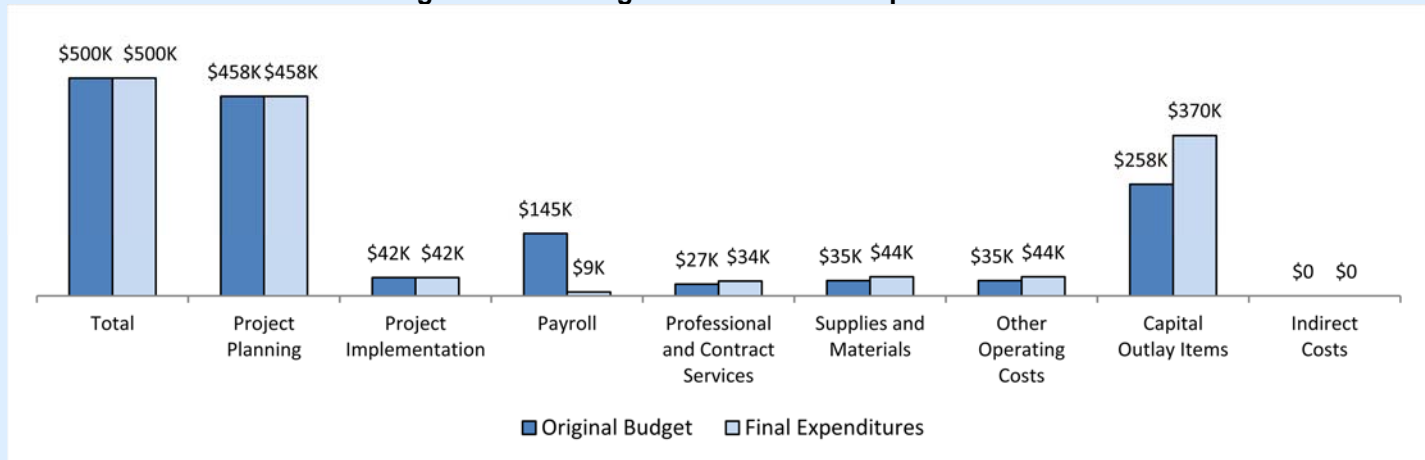
Economically Disadvantaged:	86%
Limited English Proficient:	24%
Special Education:	5%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	<1%	White:	1%
Black:	34%	Other:	<1%
Hispanic:	64%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. PPA\*\*

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Pinnacle Preparatory Academy does not have student achievement data for the 2011–12 or 2012–13 School Years as students in grades K–2 do not participate in the state assessments (STAAR).

\*\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Rhodes Technology and Media Charter School (RTM) 2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Campus Charter

**Current Grades:** 6–8

**Charter Holder:** San Antonio ISD (SAISD)

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** San Antonio area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** SAISD has overall policy-setting and enforcing authority. The Campus Leadership Team makes day-to-day decisions.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide a technology-based, interdisciplinary learning experience that prepares students with the essential knowledge and skills necessary to further their education and succeed in future careers.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	778	6–8
2012–13:	808	6–8

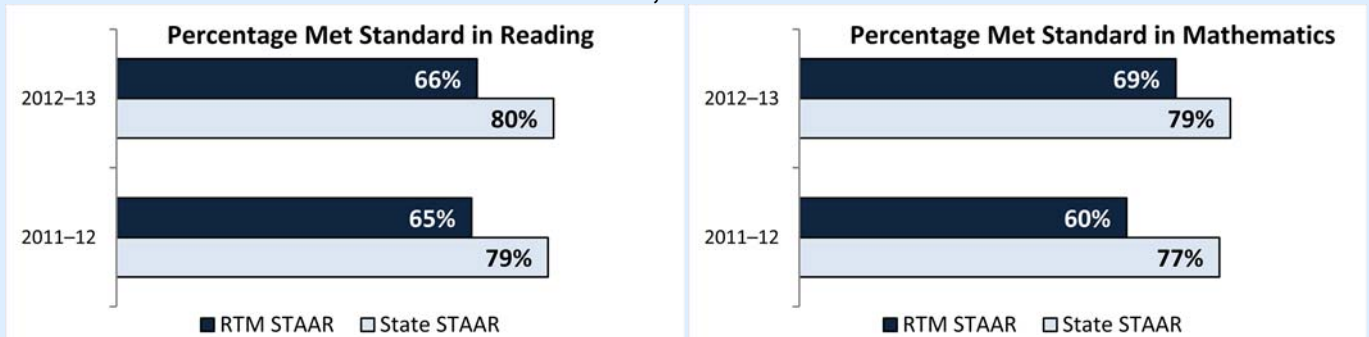
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	93%
English Language Learners:	10%
Special Education:	9%

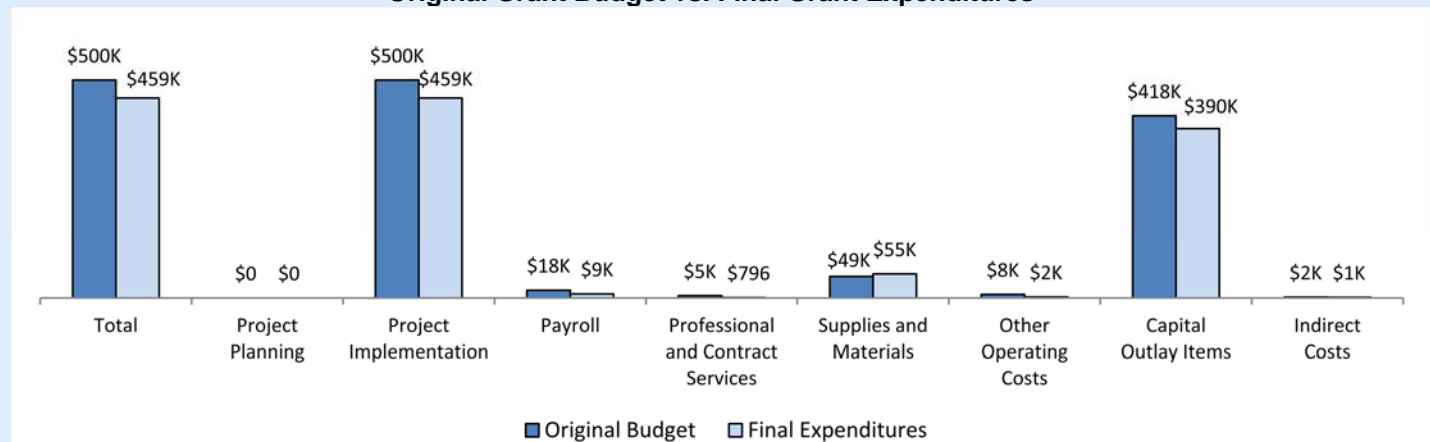
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	0%	White:	2%
Black:	2%	Other:	0%
Hispanic:	97%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. RTM



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.



## Travis Early College High School (TECHS)

## 2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Campus Charter

**Current Grades:** 9–12

**Charter Holder:** San Antonio ISD (SAISD)

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** San Antonio area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** SAISD has overall policy-setting and enforcing authority. The Campus Leadership Team makes day-to-day decisions.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To graduate all students and improve their lives through a quality education that prepares students for success in higher education.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2011–12:	351	9–12
2012–13:	335	9–12

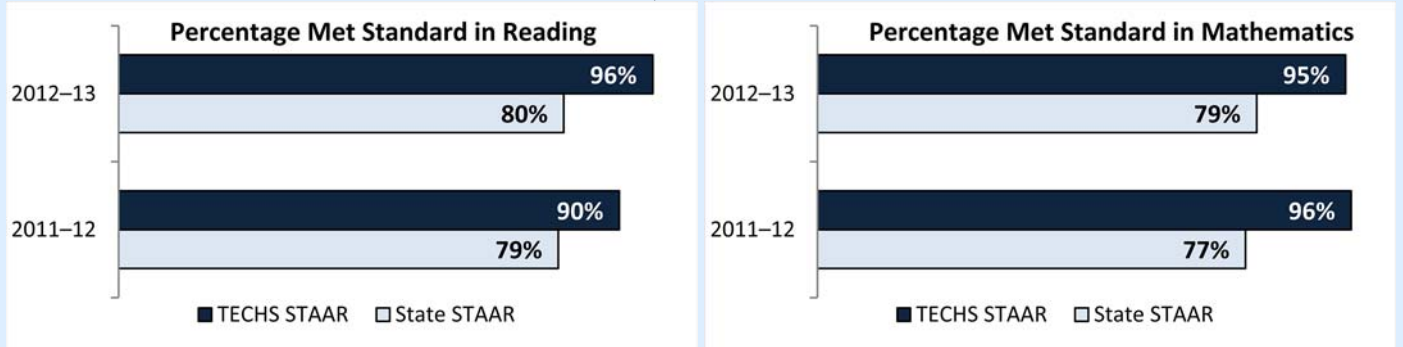
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	74%
English Language Learners:	3%
Special Education:	0%

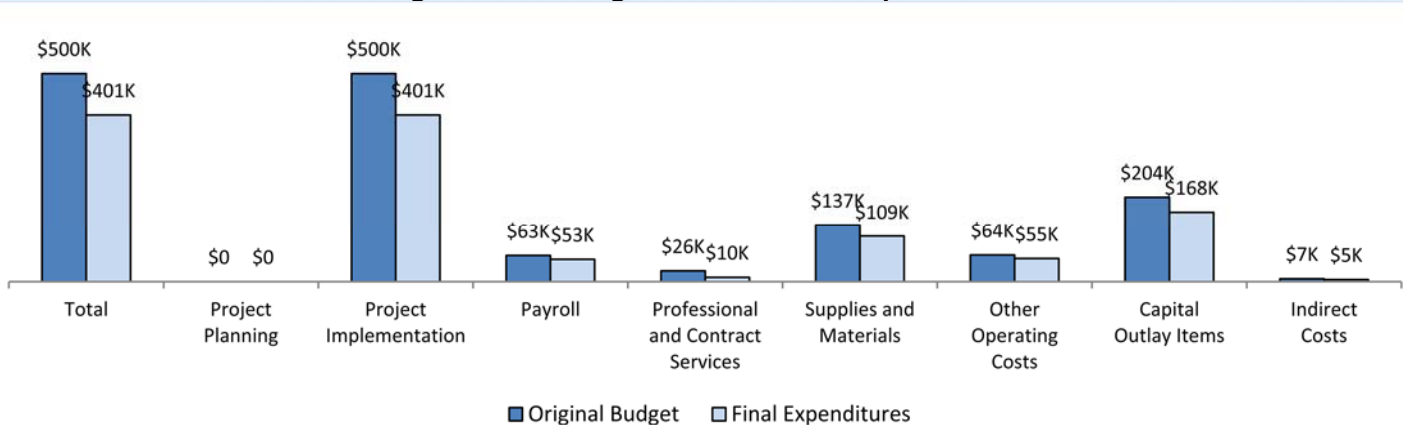
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	<1%	White:	3%
Black:	1%	Other:	1%
Hispanic:	95%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. TECHS



### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

**William A. Lawson Institute for Peace and Prosperity Preparatory Academy (WALIPP)**

**2011–12 and 2012–13 School Years**

**Year Opened:** 2011–12 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Current Grades:** 6–9

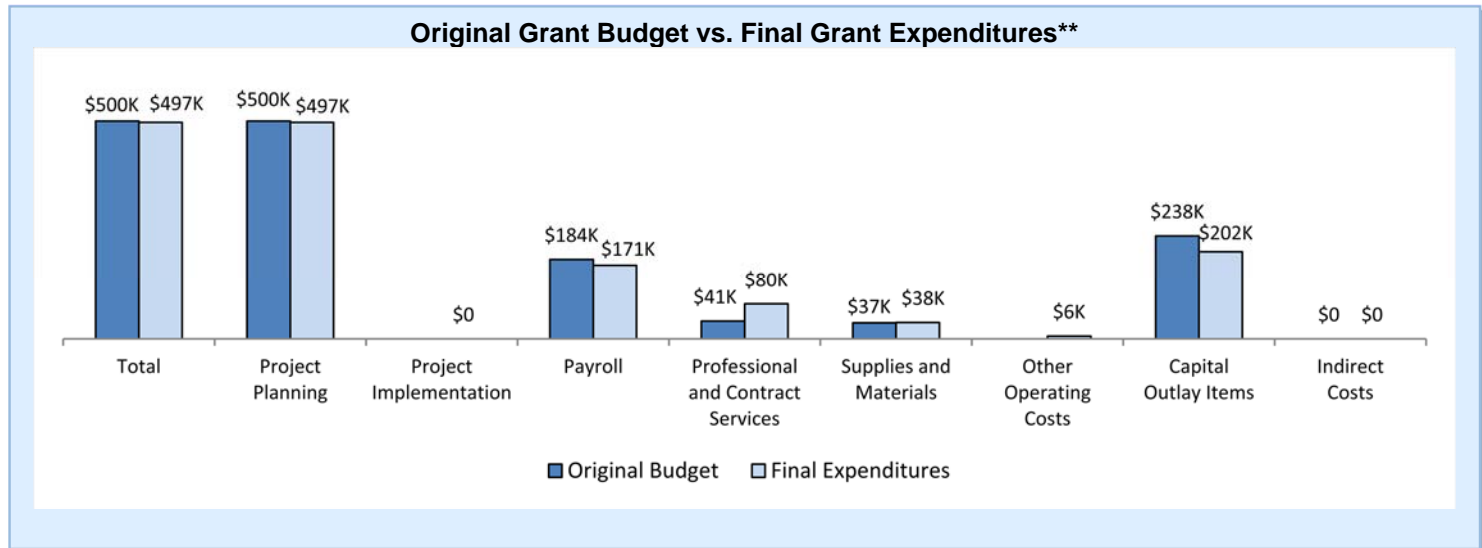
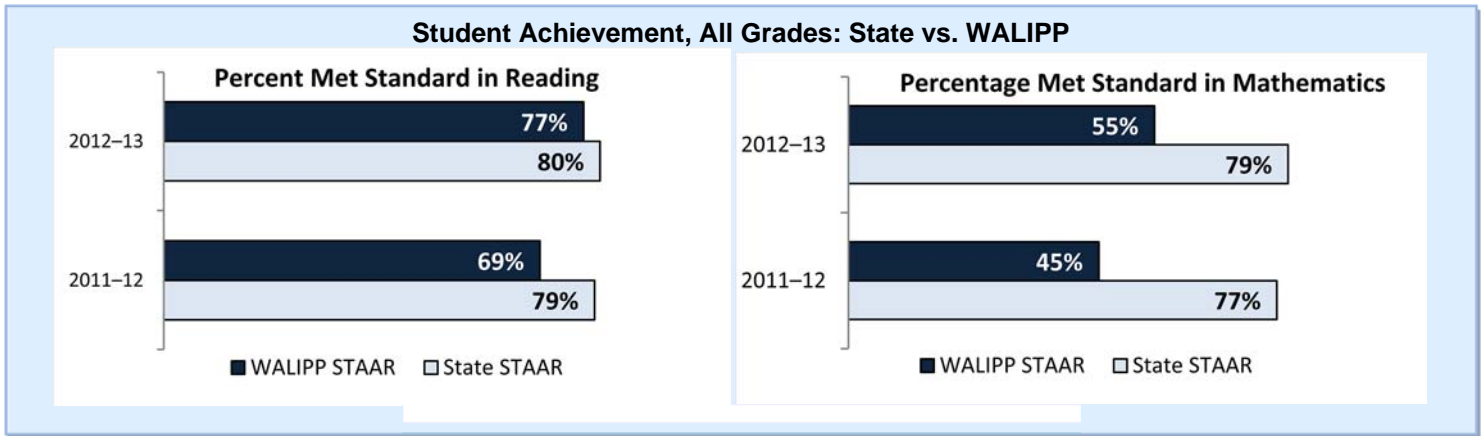
**Charter Holder:** WALIPP

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Houston area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The campus reports to the charter holder, but retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide a rigorous, energy-infused curriculum incorporating project-based learning, technology, and social development. Students will have the tools needed to succeed in college and society. Each student is recognized as an individual with unique abilities, needs, and interests.

Student Enrollment			Special Categories		Race/Ethnicity*		
Year	# of Students	Grades	Economically Disadvantaged:		Asian:	White:	
2011–12:	276	6–8	English Language Learners:	64%	Black:	Other:	<1%
2012–13:	229	6–8	Special Education:	4%	Hispanic:		1%
				6%			



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.



## Cohort II

### Austin Achieve Public Schools (AAPS)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** 6

**Charter Holder:** Austin Achieve Public Schools Inc.

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Austin area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** Austin Achieve Public Schools is its own LEA.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To set high standards of achievement; to provide a rigorous academic curriculum, interventions, and supports; to prepare students to attend and excel at the nation’s top colleges; and to become a model for reform by leveraging success and innovation.

#### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	118	6
2013–14:	278	6–7

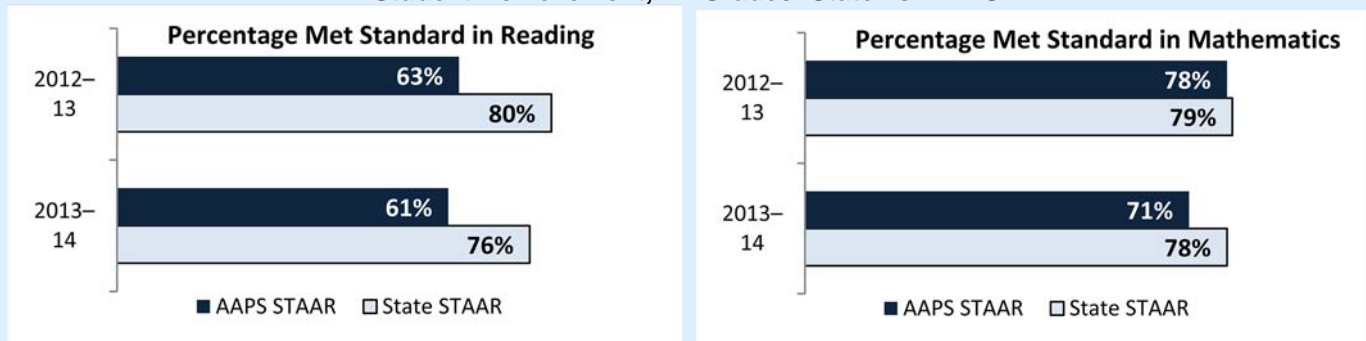
#### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	30%
English Language Learners:	50%
Special Education:	7%

#### Race/Ethnicity\*

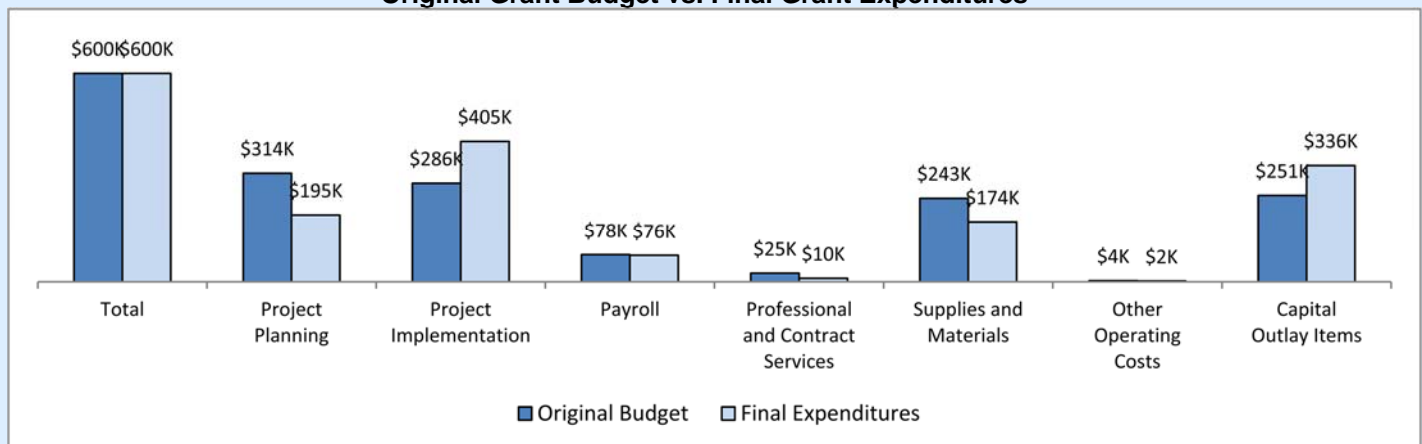
Asian:	0%	White:	89%
Black:	8%	Other:	<1%
Hispanic:	3%		

#### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. AAPS



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

#### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy (FCPA)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–5

**Charter Holder:** Fallbrook Community Development Center

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Aldine, Klein, Houston, and Spring areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** Fallbrook College Preparatory Academy is its own LEA.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide a college preparatory, full spectrum education that integrates literacy, science, technology, math, and fine arts, and to target students who have traditionally been under-supported, overlooked, or under-challenged.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	352	K–5
2013–14:	642	K–8

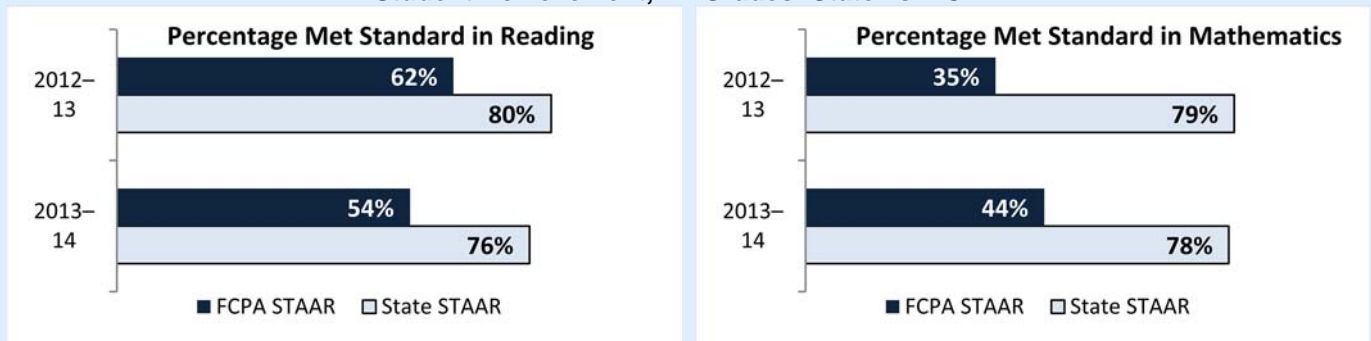
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	57%
English Language Learners:	0%
Special Education:	4%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

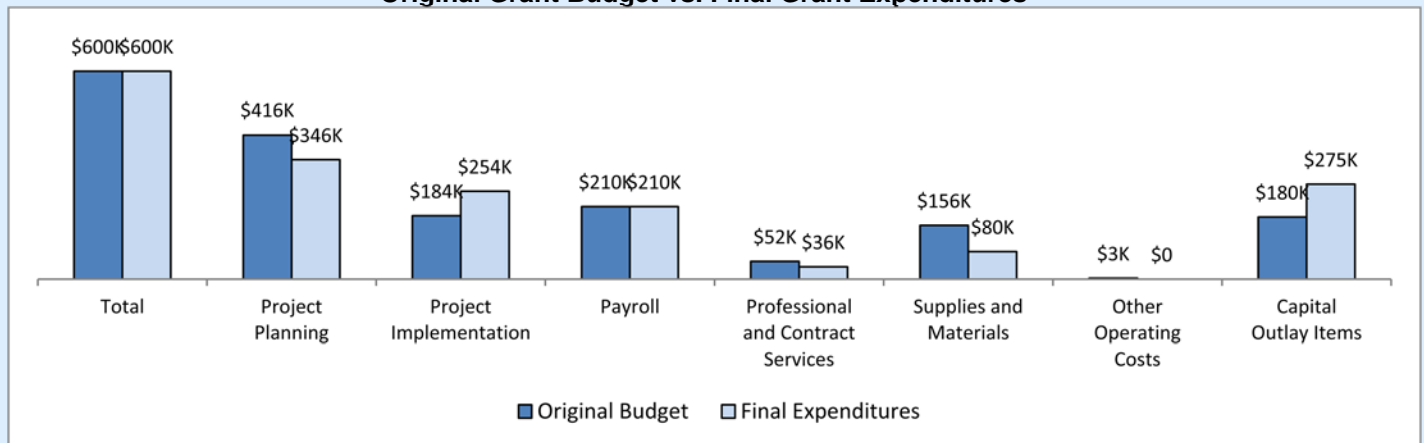
Asian:	1%	White:	4%
Black:	93%	Other:	1%
Hispanic:	<1%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. FCPA



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Houston Gateway Academy, Bowie Campus (HGAB)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** PK–8

**Charter Holder:** Houston Gateway Academy, Inc.

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Houston area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder has final authority, provides oversight, and works closely with the superintendent and leadership team.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To enable all children to reach their height of academic achievement by fostering a self-directed, innovative environment that caters to high-risk, underserved, impoverished students.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	403	PK–7
2013–14:	398	PK–7

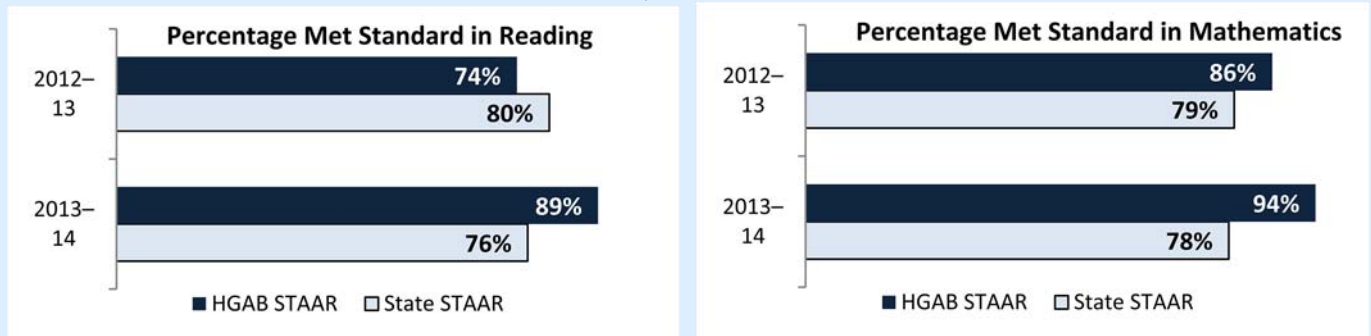
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	92
English Language Learners:	39%
Special Education:	2%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

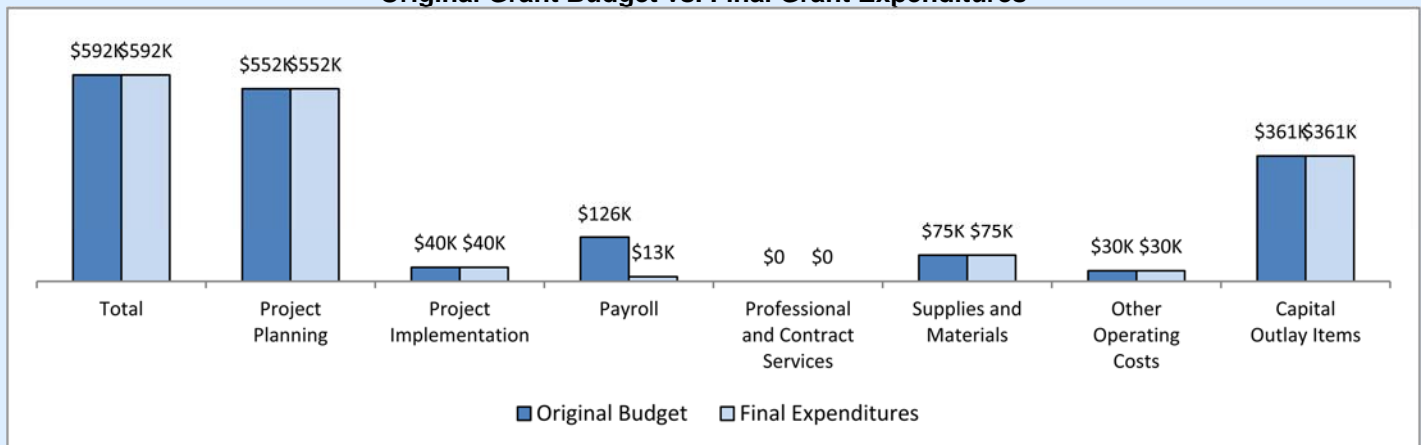
Asian:	0%	White:	97%
Black:	2%	Other:	<1%
Hispanic:	<1%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. HGAB



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## KIPP Coastal Village Middle (KIPPCMS)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** Campus Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** 5–7

**Charter Holder:** Galveston ISD

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Galveston area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** Galveston ISD has overall policy-setting and enforcement authority, and will serve as the fiscal agent for the school.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To develop in underserved students the academic skills, intellectual habits, and qualities of character necessary to succeed at all levels of education and in the competitive world beyond. We are building and educating the compassionate leaders of tomorrow.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	158	5–7
2013–14:	224	5–8

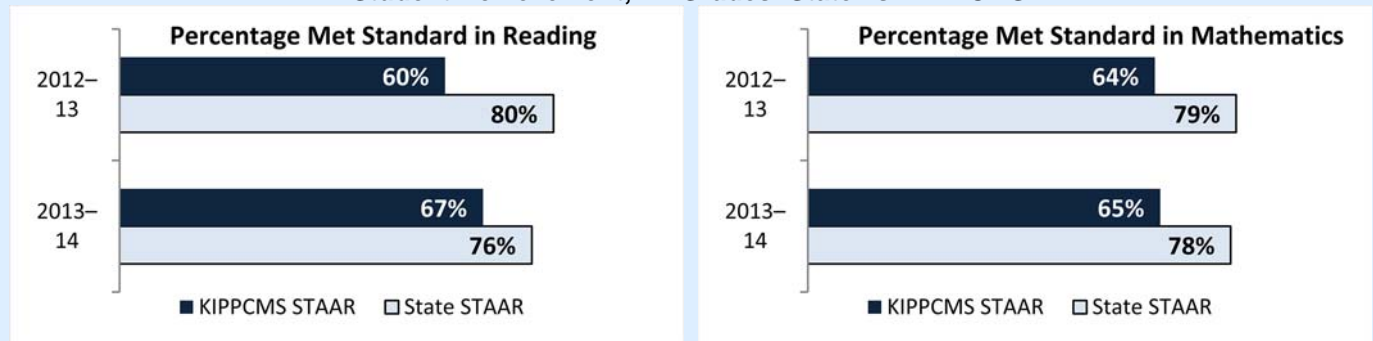
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	87%
English Language Learners:	6%
Special Education:	<1%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

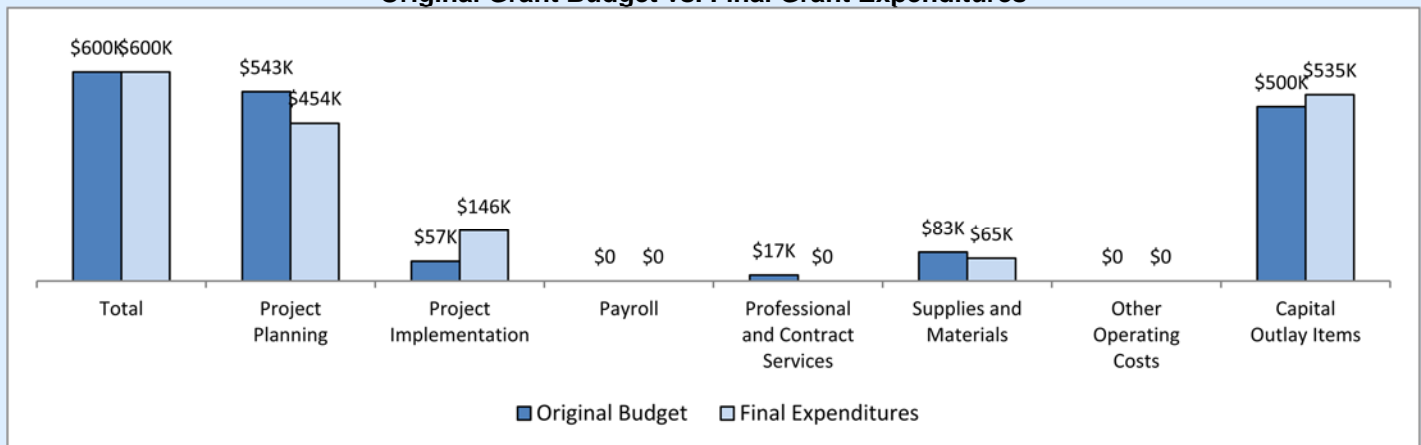
Asian:	1%	White:	37%
Black:	35%	Other:	2%
Hispanic:	24%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. KIPPCMS



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Legacy Preparatory Academy (LPA)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–7

**Charter Holder:** Legacy Preparatory Academy

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Dallas, Mesquite, and Richardson areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** Legacy Preparatory Academy is its own LEA.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To serve as a model school of excellence, address the needs of all school community stakeholders, and prepare all students to be college- and career-ready by giving them ownership of their learning and instilling the values needed to become successful 21st century leaders.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	820	K–7
2013–14:	367	K–8

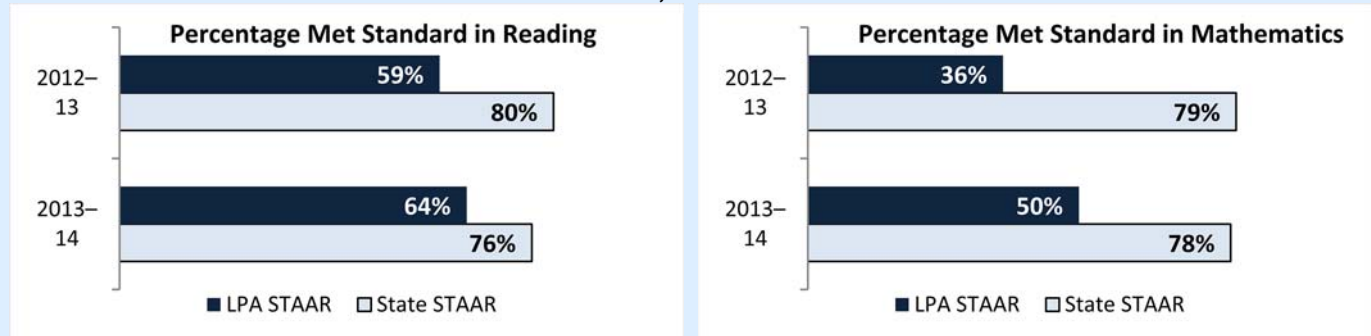
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	81%
English Language Learners:	24%
Special Education:	0%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

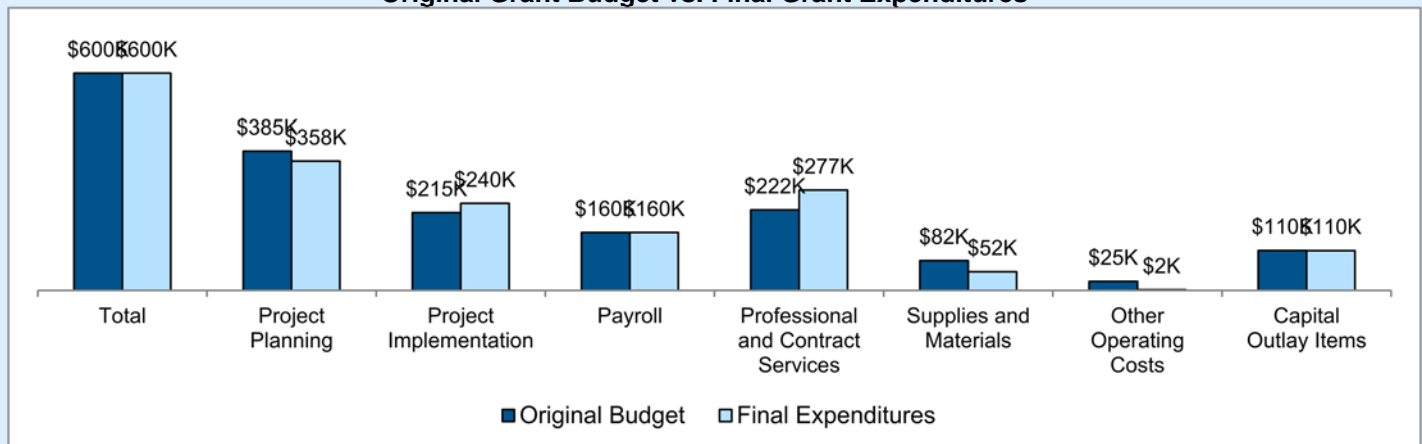
Asian:	0%	White:	70%
Black:	26%	Other:	1%
Hispanic:	4%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. LPA



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Luna Prep. Secondary School (LPSS)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** 6–9

**Charter Holder:** Uplift Education

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Dallas area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder Board of Directors is the governing body with legal responsibility over accountability and performance.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To prepare scholars, at an early stage, for college and to become respectful independent thinkers and individual leaders. It's all about learning.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	242	6–9
2013–14:	413	6–10

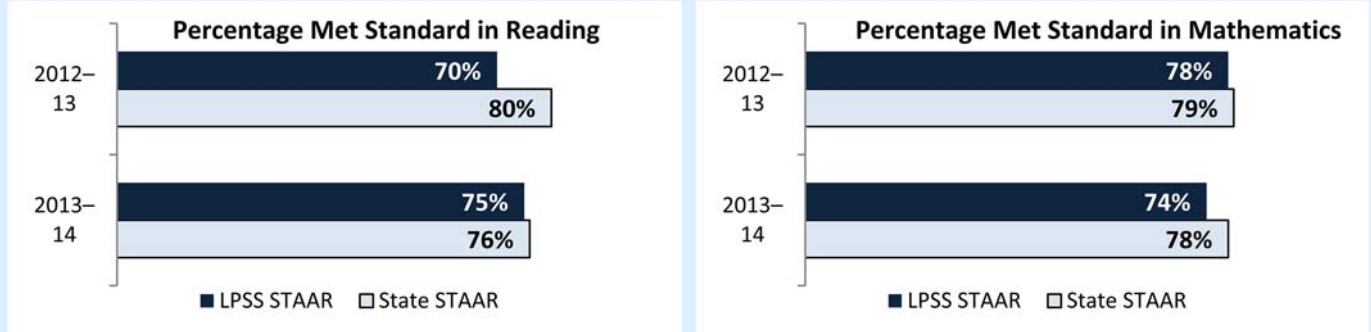
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	71%
English Language Learners:	26%
Special Education:	11%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

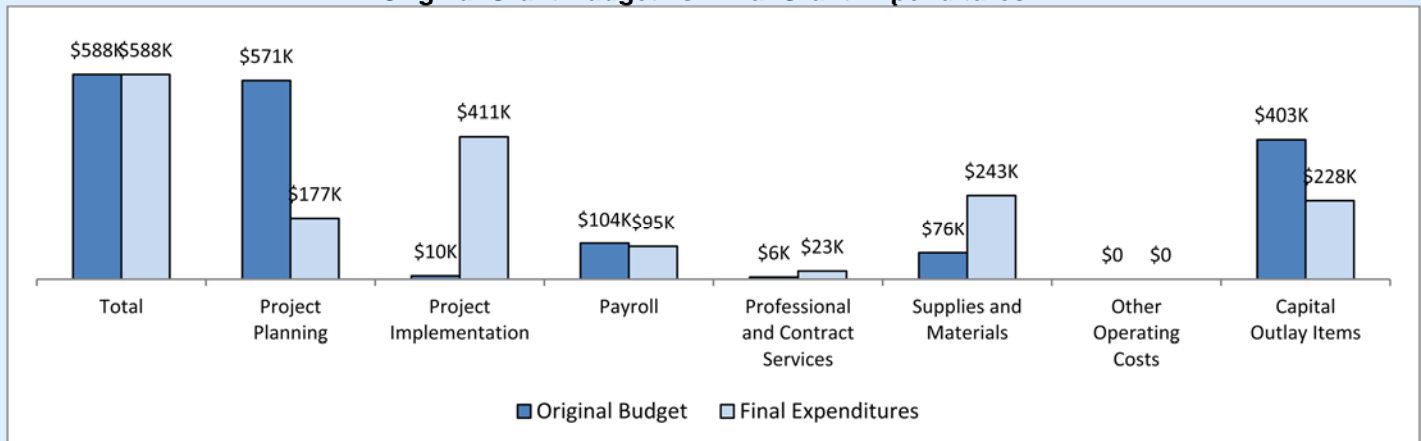
Asian:	1%	White:	71%
Black:	21%	Other:	2%
Hispanic:	5%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. LPSS



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.



## The Media Arts Academy (MAA)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** 8–12

**Charter Holder:** Responsive Education Solutions

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Dallas area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder has final authority and provides administrative support. The campus director retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide an individualized approach to education that includes intellectual and moral learning, and to make learning an enjoyable part of students' lives.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	112	8–12
2013–14:	88	9–12

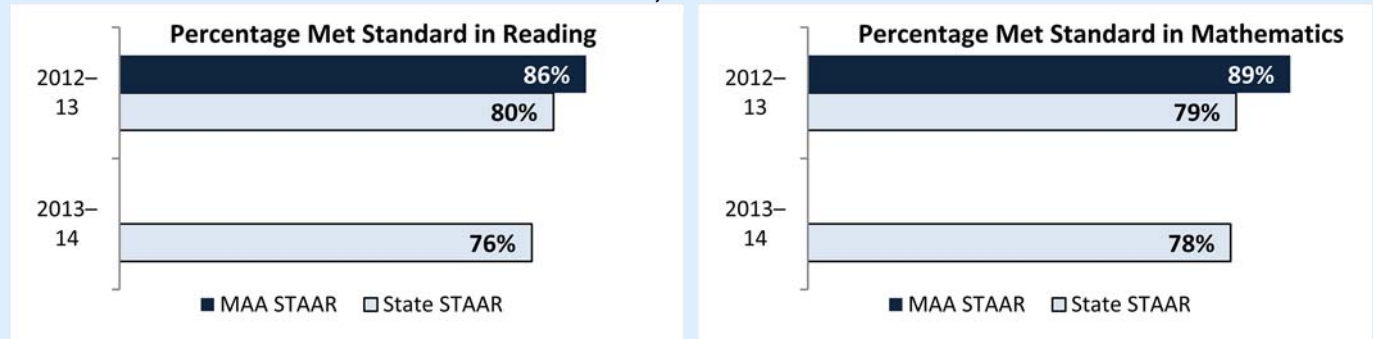
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	11%
English Language Learners:	3%
Special Education:	14%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

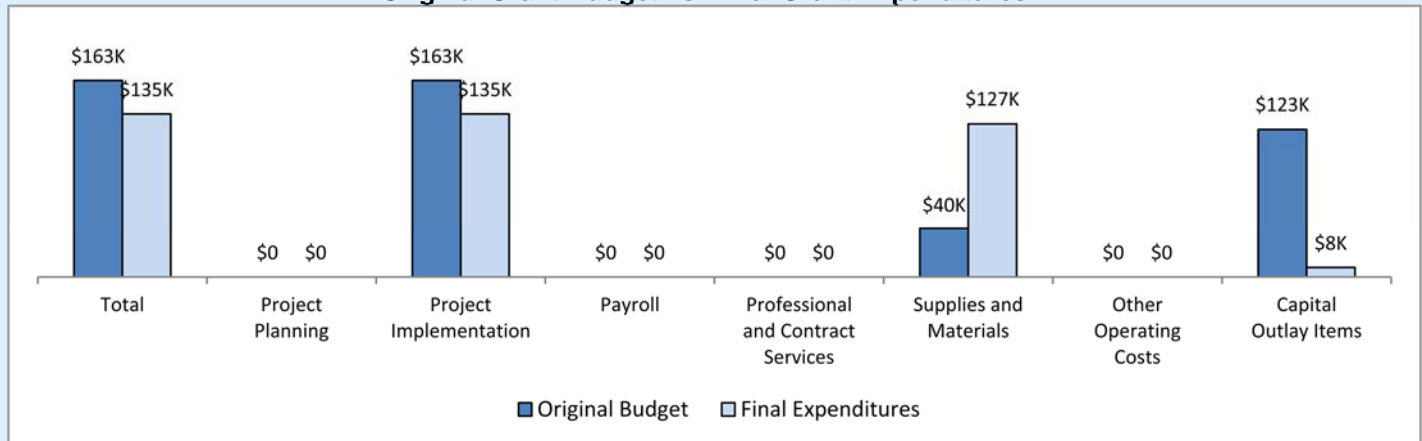
Asian:	0%	White:	13%
Black:	3%	Other:	7%
Hispanic:	76%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. MAA



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Prime Prep Academy (PPA)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–12

**Charter Holder:** Uplift Fort Worth CDC

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Dallas and Fort Worth areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** Prime Prep Academy is its own LEA.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To transform the lives of every student by providing a quality education that fosters creativity, collaboration, and character. We will prepare students for collegiate success and surround them with positive role models.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	577	K–12
2013–14:	347	K–6

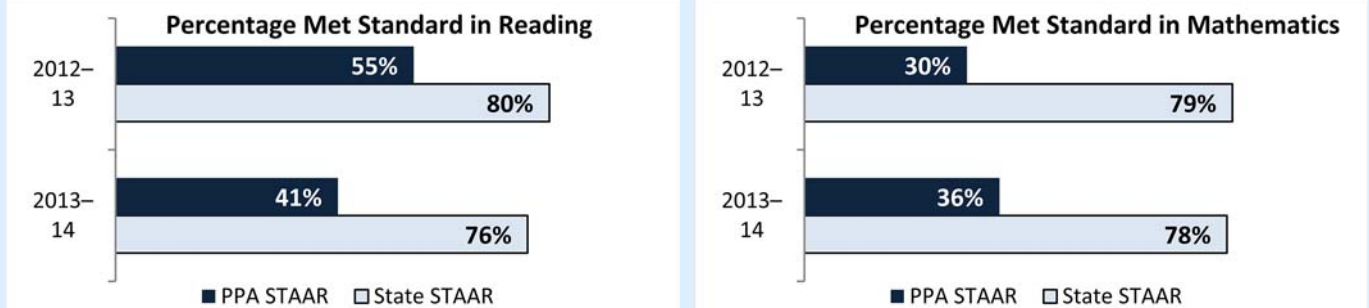
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	82%
English Language Learners:	0%
Special Education:	8%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

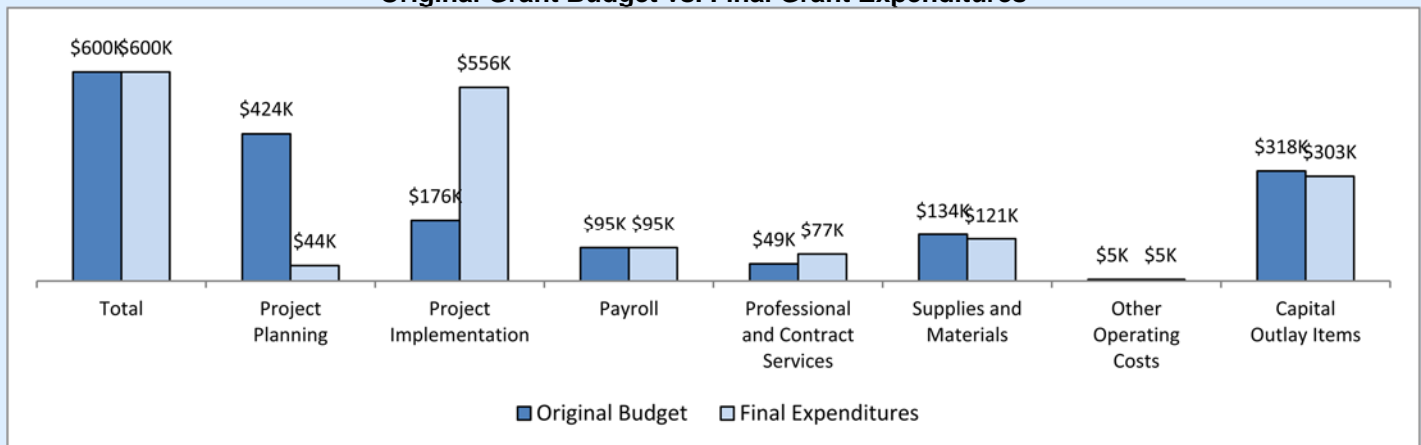
Asian:	0%	White:	7%
Black:	90%	Other:	2%
Hispanic:	1%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. PPA



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## The REAL Learning Academy (REAL)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** PK–3

**Charter Holder:** Eden Park Academy

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Austin, Bastrop, and Del Valle areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder is its own LEA. The REAL Learning Academy operates as a campus under that charter.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To develop competent, confident, productive, and responsible young adults who possess the habits, skills, and attitudes needed to succeed; to achieve a balance between the individual and the group, the quality of outcome and the process, and the need for work and play.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	312	PK–3
2013–14:	368	PK–6

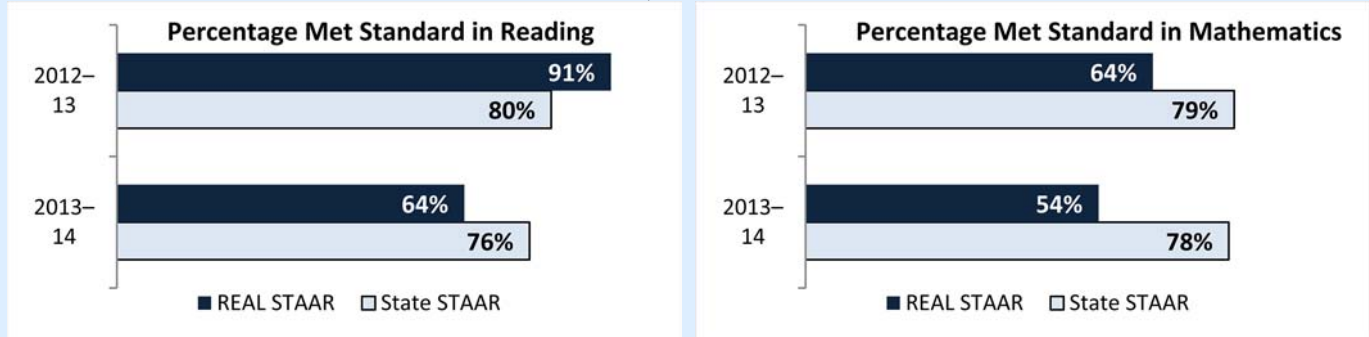
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	35%
English Language Learners:	5%
Special Education:	6%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

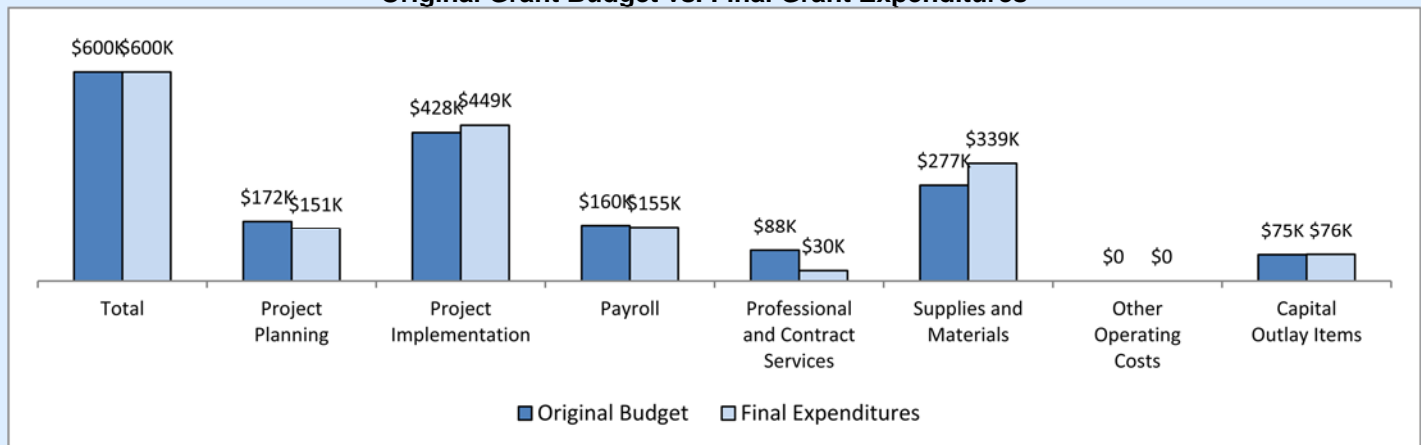
Asian:	3%	White:	37%
Black:	5%	Other:	7%
Hispanic:	48%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. REAL



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## The Founders Classical Academy (TFCA)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–10

**Charter Holder:** Responsive Education Solutions

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Dallas area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder has final authority and provides administrative support. The campus director retains day-to-day decision-making authority.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide an individualized approach to classical education that includes character building and moral guidance, and to make learning an enjoyable part of students' lives.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	462	K–10
2013–14:	718	K–11

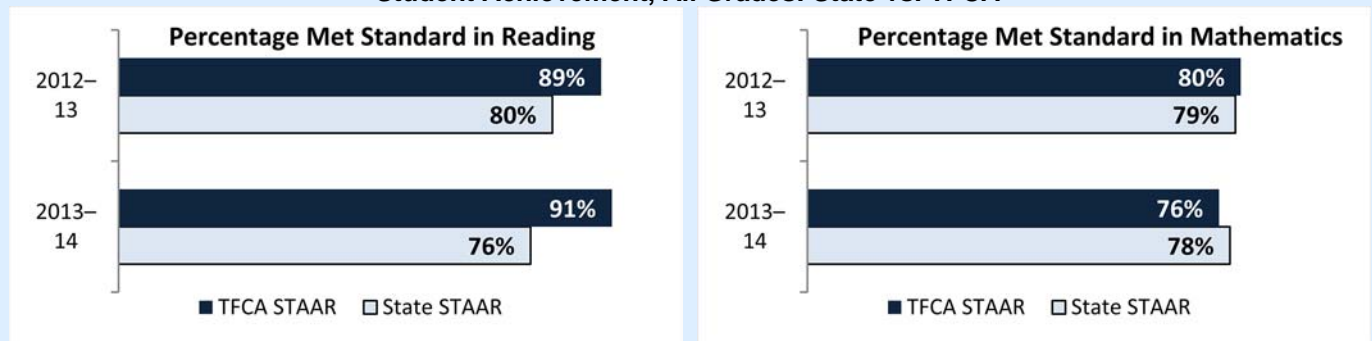
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	17%
English Language Learners:	2%
Special Education:	6%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

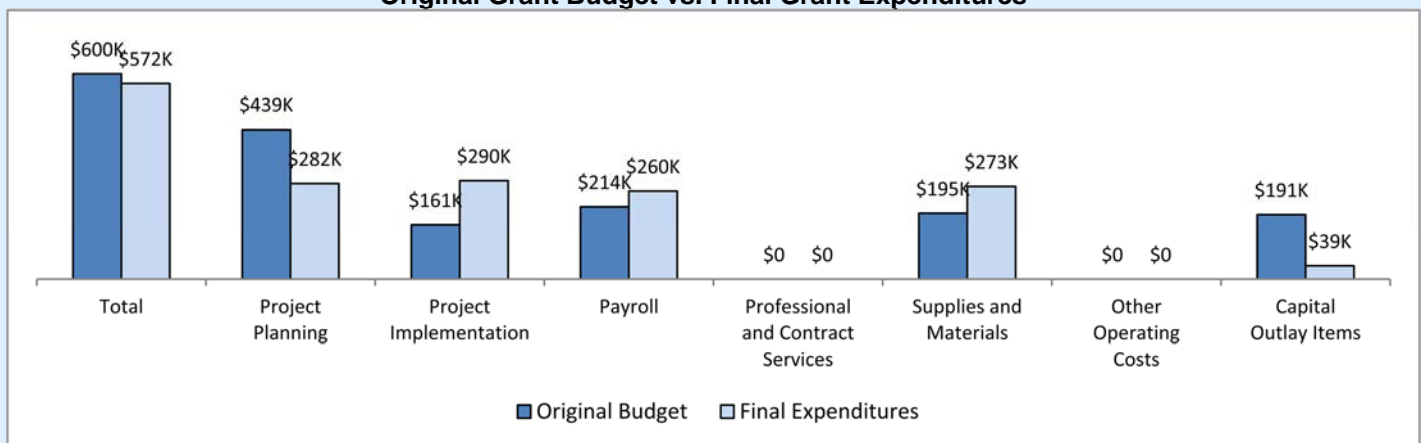
Asian:	9%	White:	15%
Black:	6%	Other:	5%
Hispanic:	64%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. TFCA



NOTE: "Met standard" indicates "At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard" on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## UME Preparatory Academy (UMEP A)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** Open-enrollment Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–8

**Charter Holder:** UMEP Inc.

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Birdville, Cedar Hill, Dallas, Fort Worth, Grand Prairie, and Maypearl areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** UME Preparatory Academy is its own LEA.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To provide a rigorous, college-preparatory program that gives parents more time to strengthen their relationships with their children and influence their character, faith, and values; to produce wholesome, competent men and women who make a positive impact.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	337	K–8
2013–14:	392	K–9

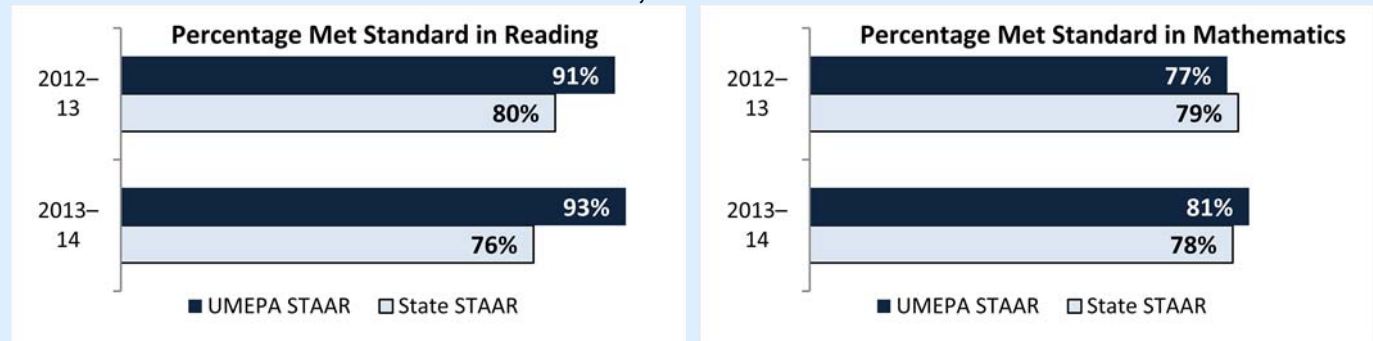
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	17%
English Language Learners:	2%
Special Education:	10%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

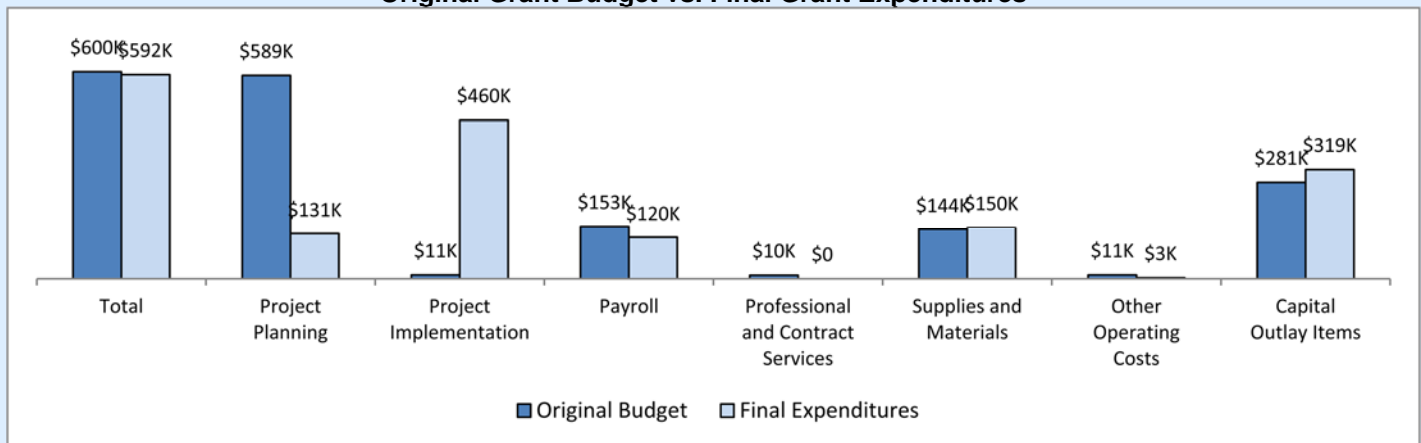
Asian:	8%	White:	19%
Black:	6%	Other:	3%
Hispanic:	63%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. UMEPA



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Uplift Mighty Preparatory (UMiP)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–7

**Charter Holder:** Uplift Education

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Fort Worth area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder Board of Directors is the governing body with legal responsibility over accountability and performance.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To prepare scholars for college at an early stage through rigorous academics. Caring and enthusiastic teachers and staff will focus on individualized learning to help the student achieve the advanced mastery of grade level material.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	348	K–7
2013–14:	553	K–8

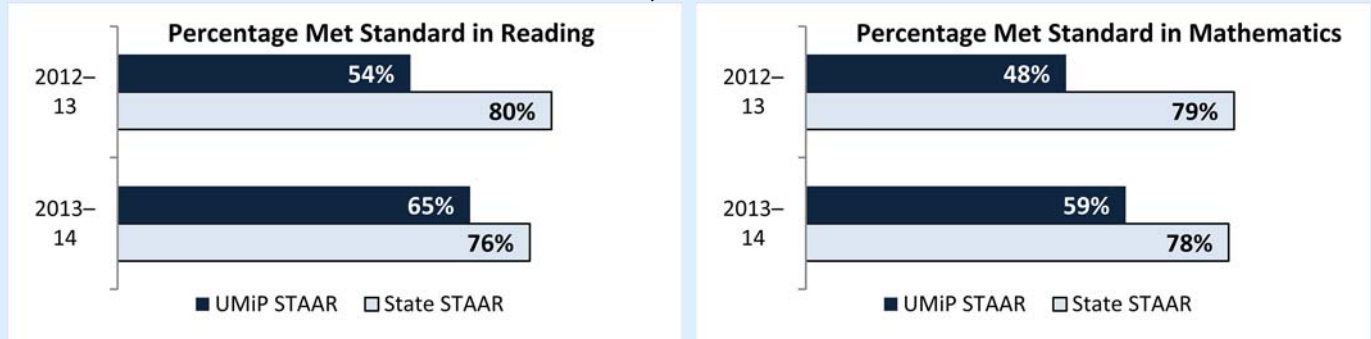
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	86%
English Language Learners:	34%
Special Education:	2%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

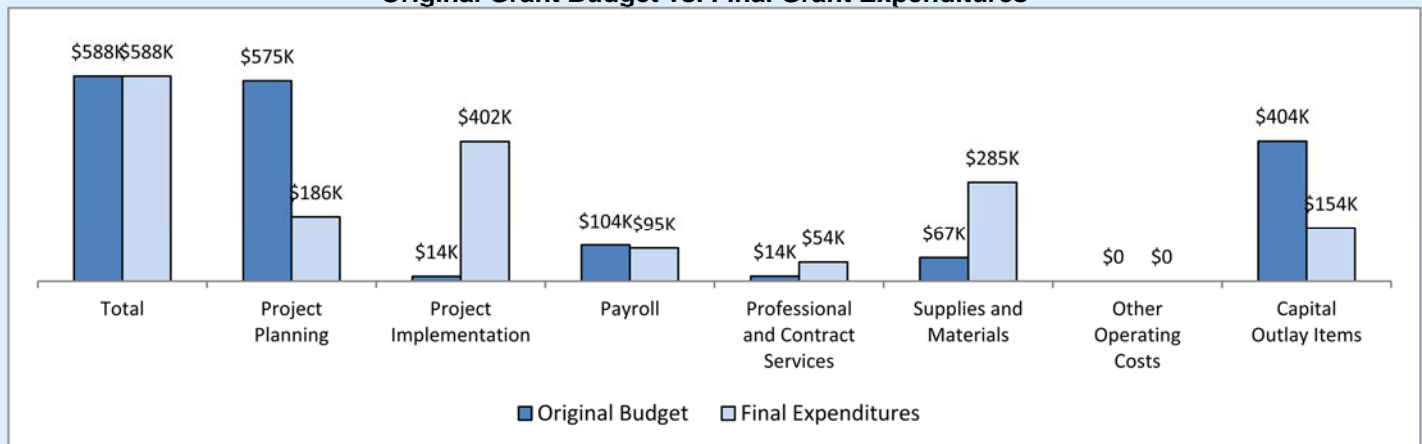
Asian:	0%	White:	64%
Black:	32%	Other:	1%
Hispanic:	3%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. UMiP



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## Uplift Meridian Preparatory (UMP)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** New School Designated Under an Existing Charter

**Grade(s) at Opening:** K–1

**Charter Holder:** Uplift Education

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Fort Worth area

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The charter holder Board of Directors is the governing body with legal responsibility over accountability and performance.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To prepare scholars for college at an early stage through rigorous academics. Caring and enthusiastic teachers and staff will focus on individualized learning to help the student achieve the advanced mastery of grade level material.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	120	K–1
2013–14:	232	K–2

### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	88%
English Language Learners:	32%
Special Education:	5%

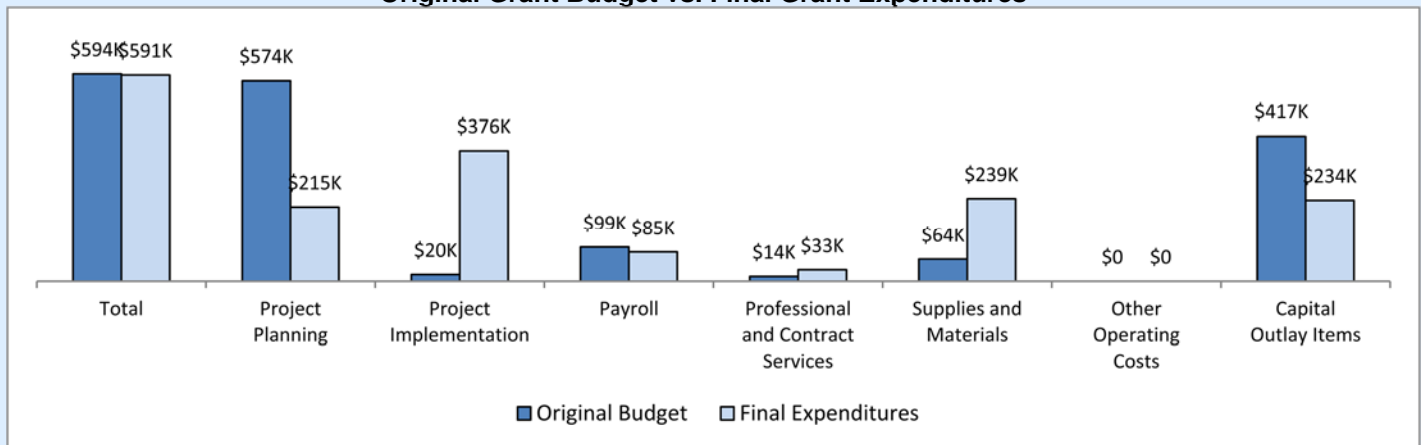
### Race/Ethnicity\*

Asian:	1%	White:	63%
Black:	29%	Other:	3%
Hispanic:	4%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. UMP

Only Grades K–2; no achievement data

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.

## UT Tyler Innovation Academy (UTTIA)

2012–13 and 2013–14 School Years

**Year Opened:** 2012–13 school year

**Charter Type:** University charter school

**Grade(s) at Opening:** 3–6

**Charter Holder:** The University of Texas System

**Geographic Area(s) Served:** Longview, Tyler, and Palestine areas

**Relationship with Charter Holder:** The school is governed by the University of Texas System Board of Regents.

**Summary of School Mission/Vision:** To develop, implement and disseminate new and promising practices in education.

### Student Enrollment

Year	# of Students	Grades
2012–13:	278	3–6
2013–14:	211	3–7

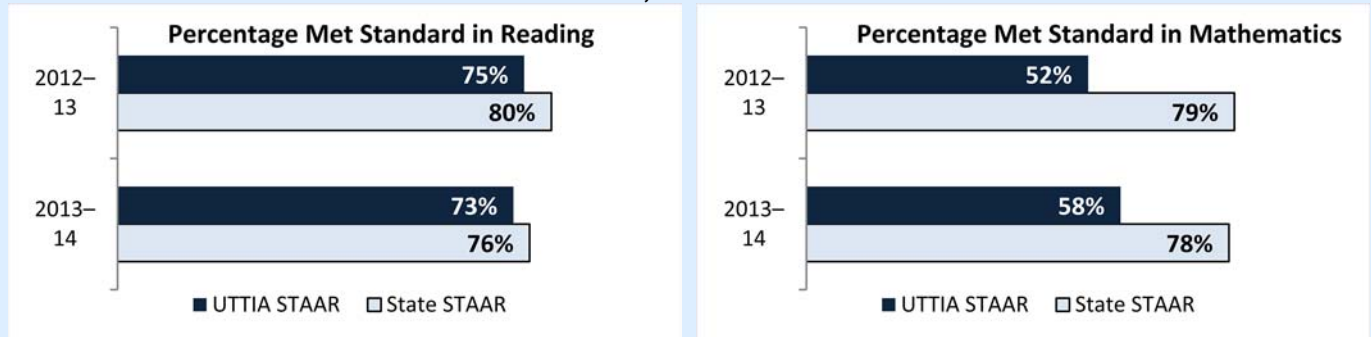
### Special Categories

Economically Disadvantaged:	15%
English Language Learners:	0%
Special Education:	0%

### Race/Ethnicity\*

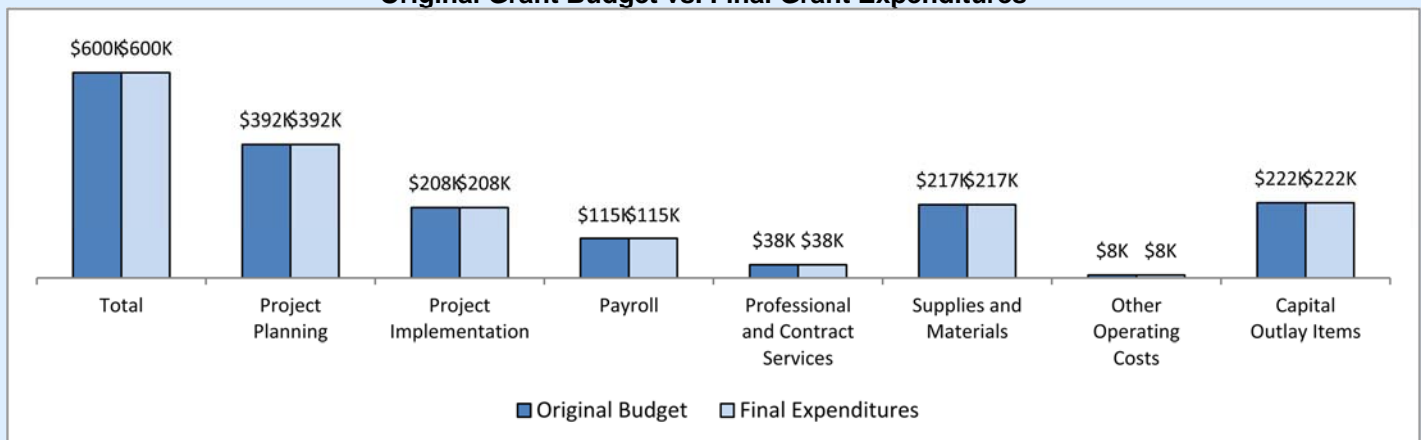
Asian:	2%	White:	10%
Black:	5%	Other:	2%
Hispanic:	80%		

### Student Achievement, All Grades: State vs. UTTIA



NOTE: “Met standard” indicates “At or above the Level II Phase-in 1 standard” on STAAR

### Original Grant Budget vs. Final Grant Expenditures\*\*



\*Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*\*Under this grant, schools were allowed to amend their original budgets within certain guidelines. All differences shown between the original school budget and school expenditures were allowable by the grant.