



The Student Success Initiative: 2009-2010 Biennium Evaluation Report

A Report to the 82nd Texas Legislature

Submitted in fulfillment of
Rider 69 (81st Texas Legislature) by the
Texas Education Agency
Office for Planning, Grants and Evaluation

The Student Success Initiative

2009–2010 Biennium Evaluation Report:

Executive Summary

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Prepared by
Texas Education Agency
Office for Planning, Grants and Evaluation

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Executive Summary

Purpose of the Report

This report is presented in fulfillment of a reporting requirement under Rider 69 (81st Texas Legislature) that required the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to prepare an evaluation report on the impact of the Student Success Initiative (SSI). This report explores the legislative, programmatic, and funding history of SSI and presents recent evaluation findings related to SSI programs that are currently or have recently been implemented, embedded within the historical and chronological framework of SSI. Finally, this report will briefly explore the future SSI initiatives forthcoming from TEA with emphasis on those initiatives that are related to professional development (PD).

Legislative Context of SSI

SSI was originally launched in 1999 with Senate Bill (SB) 4, during the 76th Legislative Session. The Rider 42 (General Appropriations Act [GAA], Article III, 81st Texas Legislature) PD Academies are the primary focus of recent SSI legislation. They were created and implemented as one of the latest in a series of steps by TEA and the Texas Legislature since 1999 to focus efforts (both in dollars and in programming) on better supporting districts in educating all of their students and ensuring students meet or exceed standards of proficiency in English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, social studies, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS). Large portions of state funding dollars appropriated to TEA have recently been focused on the creation and implementation of PD Academies under the umbrella of SSI.

The majority of earlier SSI programming and funding was targeted to districts through the Accelerated Reading/Math Instruction grant programs (ARI/AMI). The purpose of those grants was to provide districts with additional financial resources to provide immediate, targeted instruction to students who demonstrated difficulty in reading and/or math. Later, the Intensive Reading Instruction (IRI) and Intensive Mathematics Instruction (IMI) grants were created under SSI to provide further support for student achievement in campuses that had failed to improve students' Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Reading and Math scores.

Since these initial student-focused efforts, SSI has shifted to focus on statewide teacher PD programs. This began in 2007, when the 80th Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 2237 and authorized the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) under SSI umbrella. In 2009, the 81st Texas Legislature, through Rider 42, appropriated nearly \$152 million each fiscal year for SSI with a particular emphasis on PD for middle school and high school teachers. Rider 42 provided for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Rider 42 PD Academies and an online platform, Project Share, that extends teacher PD opportunities. Rider 42 also provided for the Algebra Readiness (AR) grant program, the Texas Turnaround Leadership Academies (TTLA), the Student Success Initiative Grant (SSIG), and directed a study on

developing PD and instructional best practices for teachers of students with nonstandard dialects (NSDs) of English. All of these programs, including recent evaluation findings, are described in depth within the report.

Key Findings

Since the introduction of TALA, TEA, in collaboration with the regional education service centers (ESCs), has provided training across a variety of content areas to approximately 61,000 teachers and administrators from summer of 2008 to August of 2010, with approximately 74% of that population trained during the summer of 2010. This figure indicates that there has been high participation in PD from educators within the state. As the convenience of access to PD increases with the introduction of Project Share, it is expected that participation levels will continue to broaden over time.

The evaluation of TALA during the 2009–10 school year found that the materials developed for TALA were of high quality and the training was well implemented. Respondents who attended the training reported positive perceptions of the training and felt prepared to implement the practices but requested ongoing support after the training to better utilize what was learned. Observations of the teachers in practice found that, although there was variability in the extent of implementation across campuses, teachers were including TALA instructional strategies in their classroom practices to some extent, with ELA teachers utilizing TALA strategies more frequently than content area teachers.

The impact of TALA on student outcomes, however, was limited. Some evidence suggested there was greater effect on student achievement at those campuses that had been implementing TALA for two consecutive years than those that had been implementing only one year. Additionally, Grade 8 students had better outcomes than Grade 6 or 7 students. Although increased implementation time and clarifying the teacher-student connection could potentially lead to better outcomes, increasing the availability of ongoing support, through online training courses offered through Project Share after the initial training, for example, may be paramount to widening the effect on student achievement through the TALA program.

An evaluation of the Rider 42 PD Academies, although still ongoing, will be the state's first opportunity to examine the delivery of PD both face-to-face and through an online environment. Early findings suggest that, over a short time period, PD developers were successful in preparing PD programs in the core content areas of math, science, and ELA that were well aligned with national standards PD, best practices for content instruction, and Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and national standards. In addition, TEA and regional ESC staff successfully recruited and trained large numbers of regional trainers, creating the capacity to continue to deliver PD across the state. These trainers reported high levels of satisfaction with the training they received and reported that they were well-prepared to deliver the training to teachers. Observations of training delivery confirmed these perceptions with overall high ratings of quality and fidelity across all observations. Teacher survey responses also indicate the training was delivered well, covered key content, and impacted teachers to a moderate or great extent. Increased usage of Project Share is underway, and evaluation findings of the usage and

impact of Project Share as well as the impact of the PD Academies are expected in August 2011.

Offering increased campus and district level supports may be important to creating a lasting impact of PD on student achievement. Programs such as the TTLA, funded under the umbrella of SSI (Rider 42, GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature), may help improve district and campus administrator leadership practices through a focus on those leadership practices that can lead to turning around underperforming campuses. Likewise, research supported through SSI (Rider 42(l), GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature) finds that developing an understanding of the best practices in instruction and PD that can help increase teachers' capacity and awareness in working with students who speak second dialects of English may help create an environment that promotes academic success for all students. As the evaluation of the TTLA and Rider 42 PD Academies continues through August 2011, the type of campus supports that may lead to positive changes in teacher practices and ultimately student outcomes will be further explored.

Future Initiatives

With the goal of making training accessible to as many teachers as possible, as funding remains available, TEA will continue to support the objective of the current Rider 42 PD Academies as well as to develop new and follow-up training courses for Project Share in response to teachers' needs. Working with the ESCs, TEA will ensure that Texas teachers who have not yet participated in the current Rider 42 PD Academies will continue to have multiple opportunities to do so, either through face-to-face sessions or online through Project Share. TEA also envisions conducting and using results from needs assessments to structure follow-up training courses in order to best meet the needs of teachers over time. Together, these efforts will provide Texas teachers with ongoing access to high-quality PD resources that evolve based on their needs.

An online PD platform can offer all teachers ongoing and continual access to proven, high-quality training. As TEA evolves PD opportunities offered through Project Share, and plans additional face-to-face trainings (pending funding), it will be important to continue to evaluate how PD programs such as those funded through SSI can be improved from both an implementation and content perspective. Additionally, it is important to continue to explore what the immediate and long range impacts of SSI PD programs are on student outcomes and how the usage of an online medium for delivery can contribute to improving those outcomes.



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