

Policy Research

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Enrollment Trends in Texas Public Schools

In the ten years from 1987-88 to 1997-98, Texas public school enrollment increased at a faster rate than national enrollment. The student population increased not only in size but also in diversity as African American, Hispanic, and other minority students became a majority of the total enrollment. Student participation in special instructional programs has also increased over the past decade. Of the 666,961 students added to the Texas public education system between 1987-88 and 1997-98, over 60 percent were students receiving special education or bilingual education/English as a second language services. This report provides an overview of Texas enrollment trends and growth of special instructional programs, and redistribution of the student population geographically and by community type. National enrollment trends are also presented.

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Enrollment Trends in Texas Public Schools

There were 3,891,877 students enrolled in Texas public schools in 1997-98. Minorities accounted for more than half of the student population, which was 14 percent African American, 38 percent Hispanic, 3 percent other minority (Asian/Pacific Islander and native American), and 45 percent white. Enrollment increased by 666,961 students in the ten years from 1987-88 to 1997-98, a 21 percent increase. As Figure 1 shows, the number of Hispanic students increased by 45 percent in the last decade, more than double the growth rate of the total student population. The African American student population grew at a slower rate than the total student population. The highest growth rate, a 63 percent increase, was for students from other minority groups. Ninety percent of the students in this category are Asian/Pacific Islander and the remaining 10 percent are native American. The lowest growth rate was for white students, whose numbers increased by only 5 percent from 1987-88 to 1997-98.

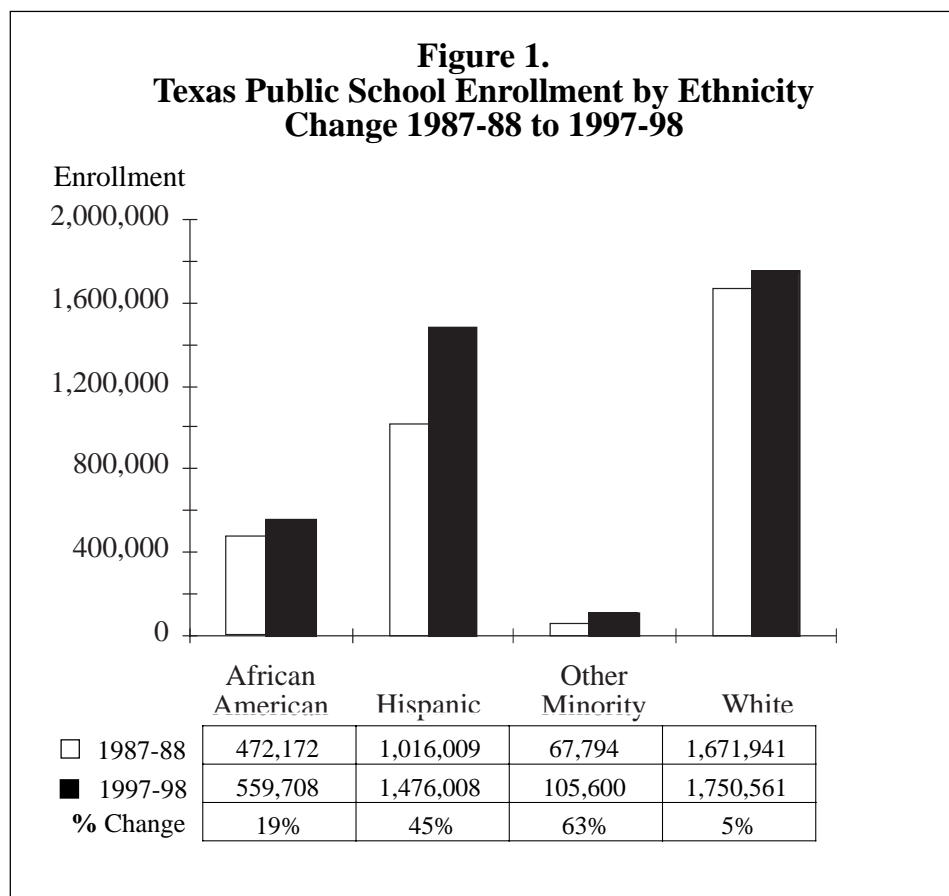
There has also been a shift in the socioeconomic status of the Texas public school population over the past decade. The number of economically disadvantaged students increased by 65 percent. Students are identified as being economically disadvantaged through eligibility for participation in programs such as the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. The increase can be attributed to state and national economic factors as well as changes to U.S. Department of Agriculture eligibility guidelines for free and reduced-price lunches. In 1997-98, 48 percent of students were identified as being economically disadvantaged compared to 35 percent in 1987-88.

Projected Trends

An examination of the ethnic makeup of students at each grade level in 1997-98, shown in Table 1 on page 2, supports projections that the trend of increasing proportions of minority students will continue. The 1997-98 first grade class is 15 percent African American, 41 percent Hispanic, 2 percent other minority, and 42 percent white. There is a pattern of proportionately greater Hispanic enrollment and lower white enrollment at each grade level from grade 12 to kindergarten. Hispanic enrollment increases

as a percent of total enrollment from 31 percent in grade 12 to 42 percent in kindergarten, indicating more Hispanic students are entering at the early grades. Conversely, the proportion of white students steadily decreases from grade 12 to kindergarten.

The only exception to this pattern is grade 9. Students are retained at the highest rate in ninth grade, and African American and Hispanic students are retained at much higher rates than white students — about 25 percent of African American and Hispanic ninth grade students are



Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98; TEA Fall Survey 1987-88.

Although the Hispanic growth rate is not the highest among the ethnic groups, it is that population that drives statewide growth. Hispanic students account for 69 percent of the 666,961 student increase in total enrollment from 1987-88 to 1997-98.

retained compared to 10 percent of white students. Therefore, the ninth grade class is not only larger but also contains a disproportionate number of African American and Hispanic students. Higher dropout rates for African American and Hispanic students also contribute to the demographic composition of the high school grades.

Community Type

Districts are classified into one of nine categories representing the type of community in which they are located. Categories range from major urban to rural; charter school districts are in a separate category. Definitions of the community type categories can be found on page 8.

Major suburban districts located in and around the state’s six largest metropolitan areas, which already enrolled one-fourth of the students in the state in 1987-88, were some of the fastest growing districts. Enrollment in major suburban districts grew by 294,684 students, a 37 percent increase over the 10 years. Enrollment in these districts in 1997-98 comprised 28 percent of the state total. The number of African American students attending major suburban districts increased by 85 percent and the number of Hispanic students almost doubled. As a result, major suburban districts are much more diverse in 1997-98 than they were 10 years ago. See Figure 2.

Districts in other central city suburbs and fast-growing non-metropolitan

areas also showed high growth. The slowest growth was in stable non-metropolitan and rural districts.

Major urban districts, the state’s nine largest metropolitan districts serving the Austin, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, and San Antonio areas, grew at a slower rate than the state as a whole. The numbers of both African American and white students enrolled in major urban districts declined between 1987-88 and 1997-98. Consequently, now over half of the students attending schools in major urban districts are Hispanic.

The redistribution of students by type of district has been greatest for African American students. Today 35 percent of African American students attend schools in major urban districts and 28 percent go to school in major suburban districts. Ten years ago, 42 percent of African American students attended schools in major urban districts and only 18 percent went to schools in major suburban districts. The percentage of Hispanic students attending schools in major suburban districts also increased from 15 percent in 1987-88 to 21 percent in 1997-98, but without the corresponding decrease in percentage attending schools in major urban districts.

Economically disadvantaged students make up a larger proportion of the student body in 1997-98 than they did ten years earlier in all types of districts, as shown on Figure 3. The largest increases took place in major urban school districts and their surrounding suburbs. The number of economically disadvantaged students enrolled in major urban districts increased by 56 percent — less than the 65 percent increase exhibited by the state as a whole. However, these districts also grew at a slower rate over the ten year period. Consequently, economically disadvantaged students increased from 47 percent of

**Table 1.
Texas Public School Enrollment
by Ethnicity as a Percent of Total Students in Grade
1997-98 School Year**

	African American	Hispanic	Other Minority	White	Total
Kindergarten	14%	42%	2%	41%	100%
Grade 1	15%	41%	2%	42%	100%
Grade 2	15%	39%	3%	43%	100%
Grade 3	15%	38%	3%	44%	100%
Grade 4	14%	38%	3%	45%	100%
Grade 5	14%	37%	3%	46%	100%
Grade 6	14%	37%	3%	46%	100%
Grade 7	14%	36%	3%	47%	100%
Grade 8	14%	36%	3%	47%	100%
Grade 9	15%	39%	3%	44%	100%
Grade 10	14%	34%	3%	49%	100%
Grade 11	14%	32%	3%	52%	100%
Grade 12	13%	31%	3%	52%	100%
All Grades	14%	38%	3%	45%	100%

Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98.

Fifty-eight percent of the students entering Grade 1 in Texas public schools in 1997-98 were ethnic minorities, supporting projections that the trend of increasing minority enrollments will continue into the next century.

students in major urban districts in 1987-88 to 65 percent of students in 1997-98.

The number of economically disadvantaged students attending school in major suburban districts increased by 157 percent, and they now make up 34 percent of the student population in those districts. Although still the lowest percentage of any community type, this represents an increase from 18 percent of the student population in 1987-88.

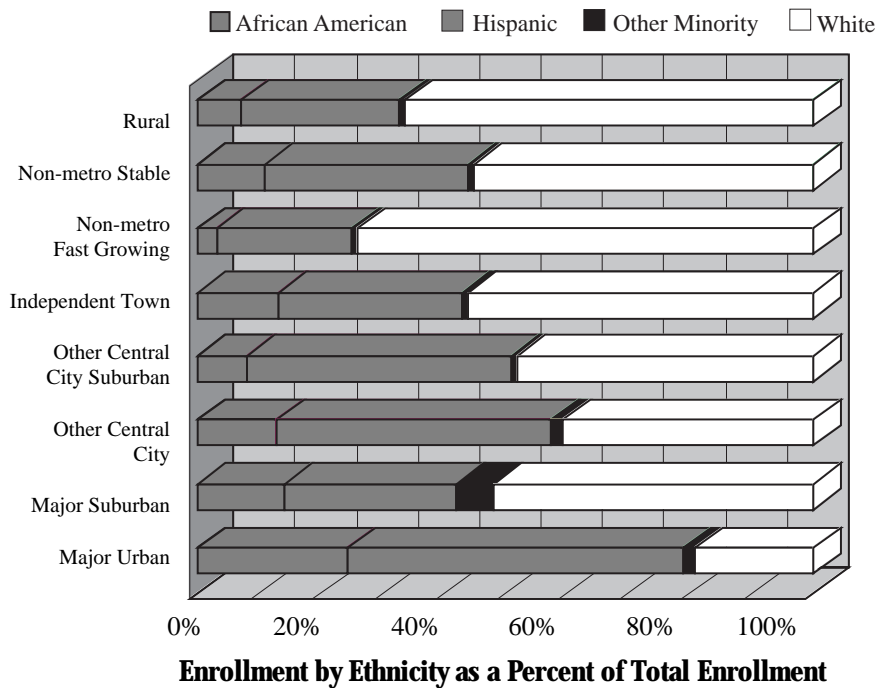
Geographic Distribution

Texas school districts are grouped geographically by the 20 education service center regions. Nine of the regions showed moderate to high growth in both numbers of students and percentage increase in students from 1987-88 to 1997-98. The Austin, Edinburg, El Paso, Fort Worth, Houston, Huntsville, Richardson (Dallas), San Antonio, and Waco regions all grew by more than 20,000 students, representing increases ranging from 14 percent to 37 percent. The regions showing growth include all six of the state’s largest metropolitan areas; however, as discussed previously, it is growth in the major suburban districts that is driving state increases rather than the major urban districts.

Hispanic students accounted for 69 percent of the growth from 1987-88 to 1997-98. Every region experienced growth in Hispanic enrollment, and Hispanic enrollment more than doubled in the Fort Worth, Huntsville, Kilgore, Mt. Pleasant, and Richardson regions. By contrast, 12 regions declined in number of white students, and all 20 regions declined in white students as a percent of total enrollment. The number of African American students increased in 18 regions, although in some regions the increases were very small.

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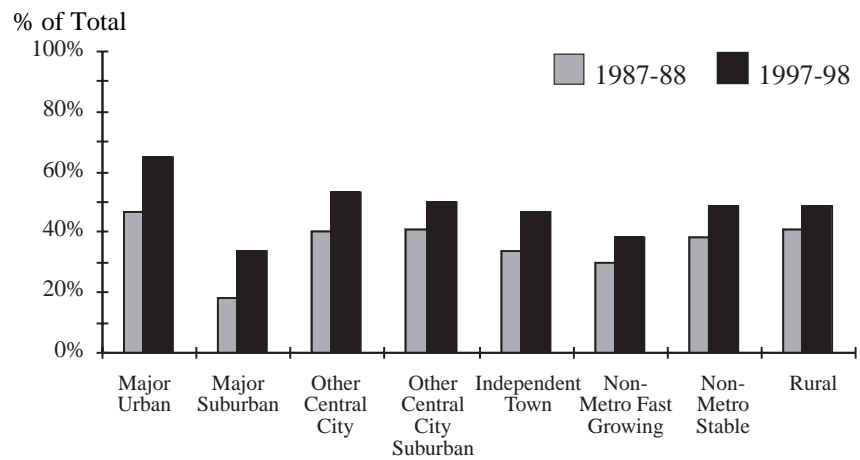
**Figure 2.
Texas Public School Enrollment by Community Type
1997-98 School Year**



Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98.

Major suburban districts have become more ethnically diverse over the past decade.

**Figure 3.
Texas Public School Enrollment of Economically Disadvantaged Students
by Community Type**



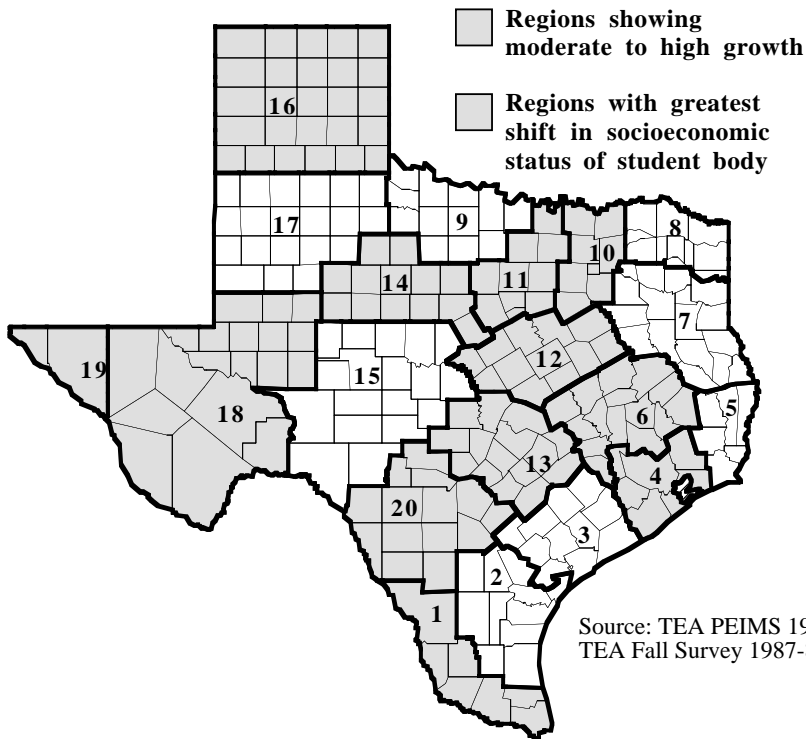
Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98; TEA Fall Survey 1987-88.

Economically disadvantaged students increased as a percent of total enrollment from 1987-88 to 1997-98 in school districts in all types of communities.

Education Service

Texas is divided into 20 geographic regions, each served by an education service center. Regions vary in number of districts and students and in the types of communities of which they are composed. Every region has at least one district large enough to be classified as major urban, other central city, or independent town. All 20 regions include rural districts.

Enrollment increased in all 20 regions from 1987-88 to 1997-98. Nine regions showed moderate to high growth — increases of more than 20,000 students and at least a 14 percent growth rate. All 20 regions



Enrollment Trends 1987-88 to 1997-98							
		1987-88		1997-98		Total Students Change 1987-88 to 1997-98	Total Students % Change 1987-88 to 1997-98
		Total Students	Percent Economically Disadvantaged	Total Students	Percent Economically Disadvantaged		
1	Edinburg	222,668	74%	284,614	81%	61,946	28%
2	Corpus	108,956	48%	112,212	56%	3,256	3%
3	Victoria	56,229	37%	57,730	49%	1,501	3%
4	Houston	659,516	29%	828,262	45%	168,746	26%
5	Beaumont	85,989	32%	87,565	45%	1,576	2%
6	Huntsville	100,438	29%	128,360	40%	27,922	28%
7	Kilgore	146,063	32%	158,973	44%	12,910	9%
8	Mt. Pleasant	52,752	35%	55,766	46%	3,014	6%
9	Wichita Falls	40,517	29%	42,388	40%	1,871	5%
10	Richardson	426,631	25%	549,212	42%	122,581	29%
11	Fort Worth	286,784	19%	380,827	32%	94,043	33%
12	Waco	109,388	34%	132,990	48%	23,602	22%
13	Austin	180,493	28%	247,989	37%	67,496	37%
14	Abilene	48,207	33%	50,444	47%	2,237	5%
15	San Angelo	48,950	40%	52,654	51%	3,704	8%
16	Amarillo	77,765	30%	80,711	44%	2,946	4%
17	Lubbock	82,632	44%	82,944	55%	312	0%
18	Midland	79,417	34%	84,365	54%	4,948	6%
19	El Paso	132,013	57%	153,710	72%	21,697	16%
20	San Antonio	279,508	49%	319,797	61%	40,289	14%

Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98; TEA Fall Survey 1987-88.

Center Regions

also experienced increases in both the number and percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged. Statewide economically disadvantaged students increased from 35 percent of total students in 1987-88 to 48 percent in 1997-98, a 13 point increase. The seven regions that experienced the greatest shift in socioeconomic make-up of the student population include both growth regions and more stable regions.

Participation in special instructional programs also varies by region, reflecting differences in student populations and educational programs.

Ten percent or less of the students in the Edinburg, Houston, and El Paso regions received special education services in 1997-98, while 15 percent or more received services in the Mt. Pleasant, Wichita Falls, and Abilene regions. Percent of students in bilingual education or English as a second language programs is highest in the border regions of Edinburg and El Paso, and the major metropolitan regions of Houston and Richardson.

Between 7 and 9 percent of students in most regions are in programs for gifted and talented students. The Richardson region stands out with

10 percent of the students in gifted and talented programs. Only 6 percent of students in the San Angelo and El Paso regions are in programs for gifted and talented students.

More than half of the grade 7-12 students in the Victoria, Wichita Falls, Abilene, San Angelo, and Lubbock regions are enrolled in career and technology courses. In contrast, less than one-third of the grade 7-12 students in the El Paso region are enrolled in career and technology courses.

1997-98 Participation in Special Instructional Programs								
		Number of Districts	Largest Community	Total Students	Percent Special Education	Percent Bilingual/ESL	Percent Gifted & Talented	Percent Career & Technology*
1	Edinburg	39	City	284,614	10%	37%	8%	37%
2	Corpus	44	City	112,212	13%	5%	7%	43%
3	Victoria	40	Town	57,730	13%	4%	7%	52%
4	Houston	61	Urban	828,262	10%	14%	8%	34%
5	Beaumont	29	City	87,565	14%	2%	7%	46%
6	Huntsville	56	City	128,360	13%	5%	8%	44%
7	Kilgore	96	City	158,973	13%	5%	7%	48%
8	Mt. Pleasant	48	Town	55,766	15%	4%	8%	47%
9	Wichita Falls	40	City	42,388	15%	2%	8%	53%
10	Richardson	83	Urban	549,212	11%	14%	10%	46%
11	Fort Worth	77	Urban	380,827	12%	8%	9%	42%
12	Waco	79	City	132,990	14%	3%	7%	40%
13	Austin	58	Urban	247,989	13%	7%	7%	38%
14	Abilene	43	City	50,444	17%	3%	7%	60%
15	San Angelo	43	City	52,654	14%	7%	6%	51%
16	Amarillo	65	City	80,711	13%	7%	7%	46%
17	Lubbock	60	City	82,944	13%	5%	7%	52%
18	Midland	33	City	84,365	11%	9%	9%	48%
19	El Paso	12	Urban	153,710	9%	25%	6%	31%
20	San Antonio	53	Urban	319,797	14%	9%	7%	38%

Source: TEA PEIMS 1996-97; 1997-98.

* Career and technology students as a percent of grade 7-12 students.

(Continued from page 3)

An index of student diversity was developed to compare the ethnic makeup of the student body in each region with the ethnic makeup of the students in the state. The five regions that are statistically least like the state in student demographics based on this index are Edinburg and El Paso, which are predominantly Hispanic; Wichita Falls, which is predominantly white; and Beaumont and Mt. Pleasant which are predominantly African American and white. The Victoria region, with 11 percent African American, 41 percent Hispanic, 1 percent other minority, and 47 percent white students, is most similar to the state as a whole in student demographics.

Figure 4 shows the ethnic composition of the 20 regions for African American, Hispanic, and white students in 1997-98. Other minority students are not shown because they make up less than 5 percent of the students in all regions except Houston, which is 5 percent other minority. Although fewer than half of the students in the state are white, white students comprise a majority in 11 regions and at least 30 percent of the students in all but 2 regions. Hispanic students comprise a majority in 4 regions and at least 30 percent of the students in 7 other regions. A smaller percentage

of students in the northern and eastern regions of the state are Hispanic. In contrast, African American students comprise a larger percentage of students in the eastern part of the state than in south and west Texas where they make up less than 10 percent of the students in 10 regions.

Economically disadvantaged students as a percent of total enrollment ranges from a low of 32 percent in the Fort Worth region to a high of 81 percent in the Edinburg region in 1997-98. More than half the students attending public schools in seven regions are economically disadvantaged.

The Houston and Richardson regions experienced the greatest increase in number of economically disadvantaged students from 1987-88 to 1997-98. The number of economically disadvantaged students increased by 183,590 in the Houston region, a 98 percent increase, and by 123,900 in the Richardson region, a 117 percent increase. The number of economically disadvantaged students also more than doubled in the Fort Worth region. The greatest shift in socioeconomic makeup of the student population occurred in the Midland region where economically disadvantaged students increased from 34 percent of students in 1987-88 to 54 percent in 1997-98.

Additional information on enrollment trends by region can be found on pages 4 and 5.

Special Populations

As Table 2 shows, student participation in special instructional programs has increased over the past decade. Of the 666,961 students added to the Texas public education system between 1987-88 and 1997-98, 61 percent were students receiving special education or bilingual education/English as a second language services.

The number of students receiving special education services has increased by 75 percent since 1987-88. In 1997-98, 12 percent of students received special education services. Over half (56 percent) of the students receiving special education services in 1997-98 are identified as having learning disabilities. Students with learning disabilities accounted for 55 percent of students receiving special education services in 1990-91, the earliest year for which comparable data are available. The second most common handicapping condition is speech impairment, which accounted for 19 percent of students receiving special education services in 1997-98, a decrease from 22 percent in

(Continued on page 10)

Program	1987-88		1997-98		Change	Percent Change
	Students	Percent of Total Enrollment	Students	Percent of Total Enrollment		
Special Education	266,191	8%	466,527	12%	200,336	75%
Bilingual/ESL	236,551	7%	462,379	12%	225,828	95%
Gifted & Talented	154,832	5%	313,131	8%	158,299	102%
Career & Technology	559,781	17%	676,547	17%	116,766	21%

Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98; TEA Fall Survey 1987-88.

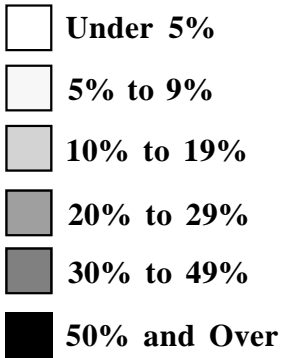
Today more students participate in special instructional programs than in the past. Students can be enrolled in more than one special instructional program.

Figure 4.
Ethnic Composition of the Student Population in Texas Public Schools by Region: 1997-98

Education Service Center Regions

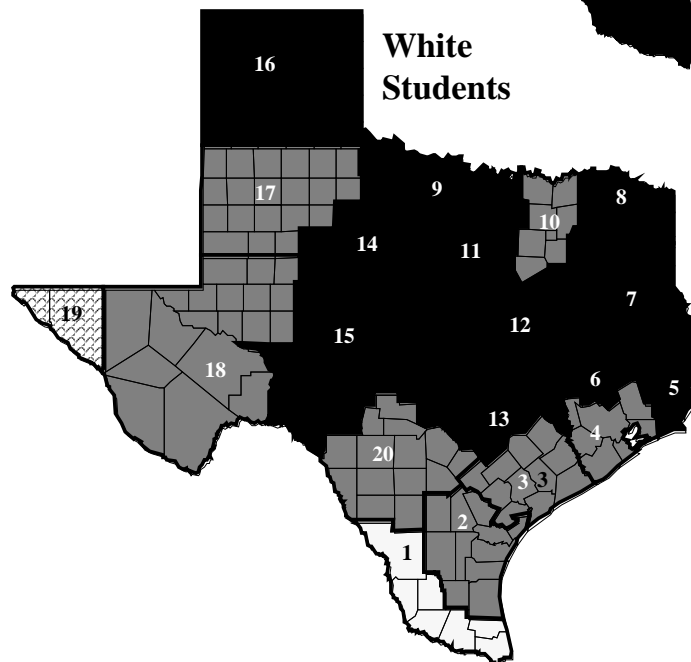
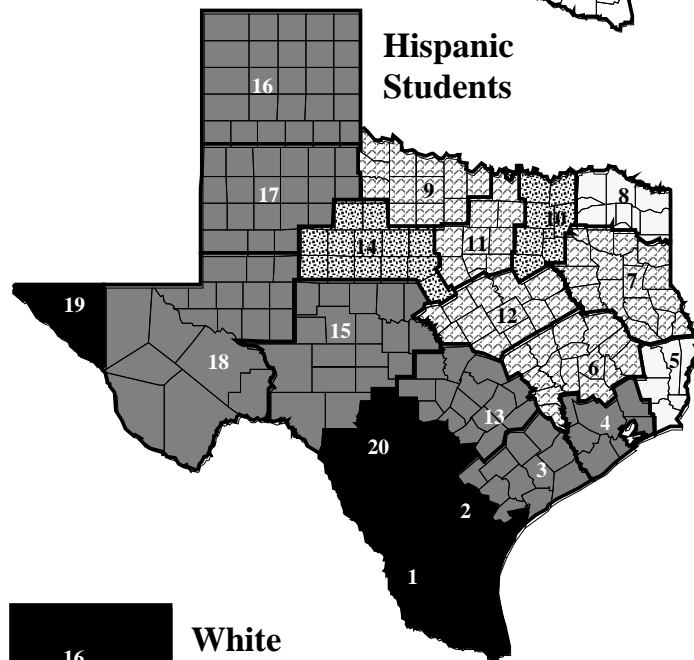
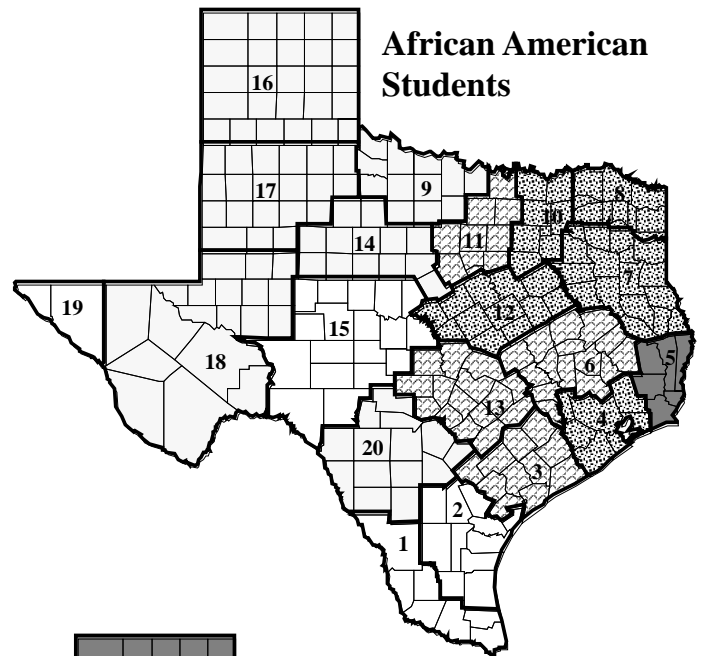
1	Edinburg	11	Fort Worth
2	Corpus Christi	12	Waco
3	Victoria	13	Austin
4	Houston	14	Abilene
5	Beaumont	15	San Angelo
6	Huntsville	16	Amarillo
7	Kilgore	17	Lubbock
8	Mt. Pleasant	18	Midland
9	Wichita Falls	19	El Paso
10	Richardson	20	San Antonio

Percent of Students



Source: TEA PEIMS 1997-98.

The three major ethnic groups represented by Texas public school students — African American, Hispanic, and white — are not evenly distributed across the state.



Community Type

Districts are classified on a scale ranging from major urban to rural. The charter school districts are in a separate category. Factors such as size, growth rates, and proximity to urban areas are used to determine the appropriate group. The groups presented in this report are based on 1996-97 district characteristics.

Major Urban. The largest school districts in the state which serve the six metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, Fort Worth, Austin, and El Paso. A district is designated major urban if the county population was greater than 650,000, it is the largest in the county and there are greater than 35% low-income students in the school district. Or, if not the largest district in the county, the number of students in membership is 75% of the largest district and there are more than 35% low-income students in the district.

Major Suburban. Other school districts in and around the major urban areas. A district is major suburban if it is contiguous to a major urban district and the number of students in membership is at least 3% of the major urban district. If a district is not contiguous to a major urban area, then an enrollment of 15% of the major urban district or an enrollment of at least 4,500 is required to be classified as a major suburban area.

Other Central City. The major school districts in other large Texas cities. If the district is not contiguous to one of the major urban districts but the county population is between 100,000 and 650,000 and it is the largest district in the county or its population is 75% of the largest district then the district is designated as other central city.

Other Central City Suburban. Other school districts in and around the other large, but not major, Texas cities. If the district is in a county between 100,000 and 650,000 population and the number of students in membership is at least 15% of the largest district in the county then it is designated central city suburban. If a district is contiguous to a central city district, its population is greater than 3% of that district's, and the number of students in membership is greater than the corresponding median figure for the state, it is also central city suburban.

Independent Town. If the district is the largest in a county having a population of 25,000 to 100,000, or the number of students in membership is greater than 75% of the largest district, the district is considered an independent town.

Non-Metro: Fast Growing. The school districts that fail to be in any of the above categories and that exhibit a five-year growth rate of at least 20 percent. These districts must have at least 300 students in membership.

Non-Metro: Stable. The school districts that fail to be in any of the above categories, yet the number of students in membership exceeds the state median.

Rural. The school districts that fail all of the above tests for placement into a category. These districts either have a growth rate less than 20 percent and the number of students in membership is between 300 and the state median, or the number of students in membership is less than 300.

National Enrollment Trends

An estimated 46 million students were enrolled in public schools in the United States in 1997-98. Enrollment in U.S. schools increased by 15 percent from 1987-88, lower than the 21 percent growth rate experienced by Texas schools over the same period. Nationally this represented almost 6 million additional students. The U.S. public school population was 17 percent African American, 14 percent Hispanic, 5 percent other minority, and 65 percent white in 1995-96, the latest year for which data on enrollment by ethnicity are available. By comparison, in 1995-96 Texas public school enrollment was 14 percent African American, 37 percent Hispanic, 3 percent other minority, and 46 percent white.

Nationally the number of Hispanic students increased by 61 percent from 1987-88 to 1995-96, the highest

growth rate of any ethnic group. The African American student population grew at a faster rate than the total student population, increasing by 16 percent. Students from other minority groups increased by 49 percent. The lowest growth rate was for white students, whose numbers increased by only 3 percent from 1987-88 to 1995-96.

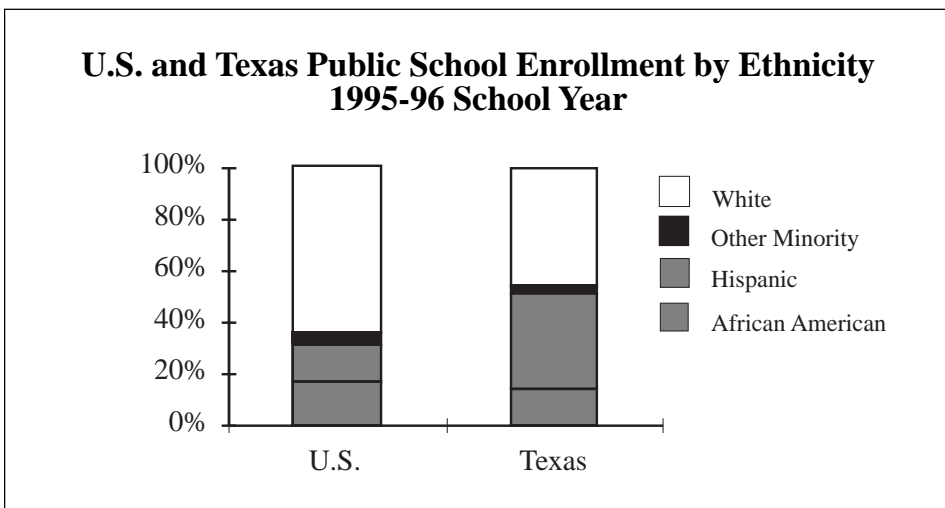
The National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program, which provides free and reduced-price lunches to students from low-income families, is used as an indicator of students' socioeconomic status. In 1988-89, on average 27 percent of students nationally participated in the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program each day. The participation rate increased to 32 percent nationally in 1996-97. In Texas participation was already at 33 percent in 1988-89

and increased faster than the nation, reaching 39 percent in 1996-97. As noted earlier, 48 percent of Texas students are eligible to participate in this program.

Student participation in special instructional programs has not followed the same pattern nationally as in Texas. Participation in special education programs was already at 11 percent nationally in 1987-88 compared to 8 percent in Texas. The large increase in participation in Texas — 61 percent between 1987-88 and 1995-96 compared to 25 percent nationally — brought participation rates in Texas to the national average of 12 percent in 1995-96.

Participation in programs for gifted and talented students remained stable at about 6 percent of students nationally from 1987-88 to 1993-94, the latest year for which national data are available. In Texas during the same period the number of students participating in programs for gifted and talented students increased by 62 percent, bringing the participation rate to 7 percent of students in 1993-94.

Bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) programs grew at a slower rate nationally than in Texas from 1987-88 to 1993-94. The percent of students served in bilingual education and ESL programs increased nationally from 5 percent of all students in 1987-88 to 7 percent in 1993-94. In Texas, which is one of the top five states in the nation in percent of school-age population that is second language learners, participation in bilingual education and ESL programs increased from 7 percent of all students in 1987-88 to 10 percent in 1993-94.



Source: TEA PEIMS 1995-96; NCES 1998a.

(Continued from page 6)

1990-91. The remaining 25 percent of students receiving special education services are identified under 11 handicapping conditions — auditory impairment, autistic, deaf/blind, developmentally delayed, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, orthopedic impairment, traumatic brain

injured, visual impairment, noncategorical early childhood, and other health impairment.

Although all districts follow the same state and federal guidelines for identification of students to receive special education services, the data suggest that there is likely variation in application of those guidelines. As a result, percent of students receiving special education services varied in 1997-98 from a low of 9 percent in the El Paso region to a high of 17 percent in the Abilene region. Identification of students for special education services is related to district size, with larger districts identifying a smaller percentage of their students.

The number of students participating in bilingual education and English as a second language programs (ESL) has almost doubled in the past 10 years, reflecting the increase in students who are second language learners attending Texas public schools. In 1997-98 12 percent of Texas public school students were participating in these special language programs.

As Table 2 on page 6 shows, participation in programs for gifted and talented students has doubled since 1987-88 and 8 percent of all students now participate in these programs compared to 5 percent ten years ago. Districts were required to offer programs for gifted and talented students beginning with the 1990-91 school year. Those programs became eligible for state funding that same year.

The percentage of students enrolled in career and technology programs has remained fairly constant over the past decade at 17 percent of total students. This includes students enrolled in a state-approved career and technology education course as an elective, as a participant in the district's career and technology coherent sequence of courses program, or as a participant in the district's tech prep program. Career and technology courses are only offered to students in the secondary grades. In 1997-98, 41 percent of students in grades 7-12 were enrolled in career and technology courses, the same percentage as ten years earlier.

In 1997-98 there were 1,702,963 students participating in special instructional programs (special education, bilingual/ESL, gifted and talented, or career and technology programs). This represents 44 percent of all students. Students can be enrolled in more than one special instructional program. For example, a student receiving special education services may also be enrolled in a career and technology program. However, only 12 percent of students participating in special instructional programs are enrolled in more than one type of program. About 56 percent of students receive no special instructional services.

Texas statute mandated prekindergarten programs for four-year-old children who are second language learners or who are from low-income families in 1986. Districts that identify 15 eligible children who are at least four years old are required to offer the programs. Districts also may offer programs for three year old children who are eligible. Eligible children are not required to attend the programs. The number of students enrolled in prekindergarten programs has increased by 72 percent over the past 10 years. In 1987-88, 659 districts provided prekindergarten programs to 70,645 children. In

1997-98, 121,241 children in Texas participated in prekindergarten education programs in 769 districts.

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