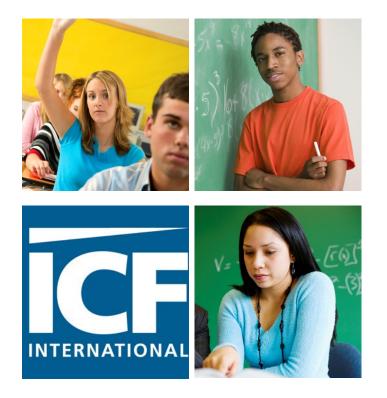# Executive Summary

Evaluation of the Intensive Summer Pilot Program: A High School Success Pilot Program

February 2011 Report

Submitted to:

Texas Education Agency

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ICF International

CREDITS

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Executive Summary

Highlights:

The purpose of the Intensive Summer Programs (ISP) initiative is to provide intensive academic instruction during the summer to promote college and career readiness for students in Grades 6-12 identified as being at risk of dropping out of school.

Between 2008 and 2009, 48 grantees were awarded a total of $7,804,795 to implement ISP. Grantees used such funds to serve 6,733 middle and high school students at risk of dropping out of school with a variety of math, ELA/reading, and science curricula.

ISP grantees implemented their programs in accordance with grant requirements and within budget.

Despite some successes, ISP had a limited impact on student outcomes.

- Middle and high school 2009 ISP students made significant TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading gains. High school 2008 ISP students did, too, but middle school 2008 ISP students did not.
- Grade promotion rates among 2008 students declined over time.
- Although grade retention rates declined, they remained higher than the statewide average rate.
- Because of time lags in the availability of dropout data, it is not yet possible to determine the relationship between ISP participation and the likelihood that students will remain in school.

This report presents findings from the evaluation of the Intensive Summer Programs (ISP) pilot program, implemented during summer 2008 and summer 2009. ISP is one of three grant programs grouped together as the High School Success Pilot Programs (HSSPP).[1] The other two programs are the Mathematics Instructional Coaches pilot program (MIC) and the Collaborative Dropout Reduction pilot program (CDR). Collectively, these three grant programs, among others, were authorized and funded by the 80th Texas Legislature in 2007[2] so awarded local education agencies (LEAs [school districts and open enrollment charter schools]) could develop and implement projects to prevent and reduce dropout, increase high school success, and improve college and career readiness in public schools.

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[1] The programs were grouped together for evaluation purposes; however, they are each independent grants that have common goals, but not common grantees or requirements.

[2] All three HSSPP programs were authorized by House Bill 2237 (80th Texas Legislature), as amended by the 81st Texas Legislature. Specifically, ISP was authorized as Texas Education Code § 29.098. All three programs were funded by Rider 53 (General Appropriations Act [GAA], Article III, 80th Texas Legislature); further funded by Rider 51 (GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature). The evaluation is required by Rider 79 (GAA, Article III, 80th Texas Legislature); further required by Rider 69 (GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature). A final report will be due to the Texas Legislature in January 2013, pending further funding.

ISP Goals

ISP is being implemented to reduce the statewide dropout rate and to increase the college and career readiness of Texas public school students. ISP requires LEAs to partner with institutions of higher education (IHEs) to provide intensive academic instruction for students in Grades 6-12 identified as being at risk of dropping out of school.[3] The pilot program was designed as a model for future intensive summer programs at the state and local levels. The specific goals of ISP include the following:

- Increase student readiness for college coursework

- Increase collaboration among LEAs and IHEs

- Decrease the number of students in need of remedial coursework

- Increase the number of students promoted to the next grade

- Provide models of effective summer programs

ISP Evaluation

TEA contracted with ICF International to conduct an evaluation of ISP. The comprehensive evaluation approach was designed to address the following objectives:

- Evaluate the implementation of ISP

- Evaluate the impact of ISP on student outcomes

- Evaluate the impact of ISP on teacher effectiveness

- Assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of ISP

This report describes ISP project implementation in the summers of 2008 and 2009, and preliminary findings on student and teacher outcomes through the 2009–10 school year. Finally, analyses of the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of the ISP program are presented.

ISP Grantees

In total, 29 ISP Cycle 1 grants were awarded to local education agencies (LEAs) that applied for funding. Although 29 Cycle 1 grants were awarded, only 21 grantees implemented in summer 2008. The remaining eight Cycle 1 grantees planned their ISP projects in 2008 and implemented in summer 2009.[4] For the purposes of analysis, implementation and outcomes data are reported for Cycle 1 grantees by year of implementation. Thus, data from those Cycle 1 grantees implementing the program in their first year of funding are referred to as Cycle 1-Year 1 data. Cycle 1-Year 2 data, on the other hand, include all Cycle 1 grantees as all were

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[3] At-risk students are defined by TEA as students who exhibit at least one of 13 risk factors. A complete listing of risk factors can be found online <u>here</u>.

[4] TEA awarded Cycle 1 continuation grants to 27 Cycle 1 grantees to continue ISP through September 2011. This aspect of the grant was not included in the evaluation.

implementing by the summer of 2009, the second year of Cycle 1 funding. In some cases, Cycle 1 data are further disaggregated to differentiate between those grantees in their first year of implementation from those in their second.

In addition, 19 Cycle 2 grants were awarded to LEAs that applied for funding. Implementation of Cycle 2 projects began in summer 2009 and ended October 2010. Data collection for the evaluation ended prior to the end of the Cycle 2 grant project period, so some Cycle 2 analyses are more limited than Cycle 1.

ISP Implementation

As described in this section, ISP Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 projects were similar in terms of the demographic characteristics of participating LEAs and campuses, program objectives, partners, the selection of instructional activities used in the content areas, supplemental activities, and facilitators of and barriers to implementation. However, Cycle 1 and 2 projects offered instructional activities in the content areas (reading, math, and science) at different frequencies.

Characteristics of LEAs and Campuses

Both ISP Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 projects targeted the at-risk student population, the intended population of the ISP Program (Table ES-1). The Cycle 2 LEAs were larger than Cycle 1 LEAs; however, the demographic characteristics were comparable. Grantees in both cycles were LEAs with large populations of economically disadvantaged students, at-risk students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, and special education students.

As with the LEA characteristics, the Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantee campuses were comparable in terms of risk factors, including percentages of students classified as at-risk for dropping out of school, economically disadvantaged, LEP, and special education. Prior to ISP implementation, slightly more students met the standard on TAKS in Cycle 2 grantee campuses in math, ELA/reading, and science than Cycle 1 campuses. In general, however, the demographic characteristics of Cycle 1 and 2 campuses were similar.

Table ES-1: LEA and Campus Characteristics of ISP Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Grantees

	ISP Cycle 1	ISP Cycle 2
LEA Characteristics	- Average number of schools per grantee = 19 82% economically disadvantaged 65% at risk for dropping out 24% LEP 8% special education	- Average number of schools per grantee = 48 82% economically disadvantaged 63% at risk for dropping out 20% LEP 10% special education
Campus Characteristics	78% economically disadvantaged 64% at risk for dropping out 12% limited English proficient 10% special education 66% met standard on TAKS-Math 84% met standard on TAKS-Reading 55% met standard on TAKS-Science	80% economically disadvantaged 60% at risk for dropping out 14% limited English proficient 13% special education 68% met standard on TAKS-Math 86% met standard on TAKS-Reading 61% met standard on TAKS-Science

Characteristics of Students Served

Both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees targeted and served the intended population of students at risk of dropping out. During 2008 and 2009, ISP grantees provided services to a total of 6,733 middle and high school students at risk of dropping out of school. Key risk factors associated with dropping out include low student achievement, economic disadvantage, LEP status, and special education status (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007).

Across grant cycles and implementation years, grantees served students with many of these risk factors. For instance, the majority of students served were considered at risk of dropping out of school, and most ISP students were economically disadvantaged. Grantees also served substantial percentages of LEP students and special education students.

Program Types

All Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees provided academic instruction to students. Among Cycle 1 grantees implementing in 2008, the largest percentage of students served participated in ELA/reading academic programs. However, among Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees implementing in 2009, the largest percentages of students participated in math academic programs.

ISP grantees also offered students credit recovery opportunities (i.e., earning credit for classes previously failed). Cycle 2 sites provided credit recovery to the largest percentage of students, with 53% of students served by such sites taking advantage of credit recovery; Cycle 1-Year 2 sites implementing in 2009 provided credit recovery to the fewest students, with 18% of students served by these sites participating in credit recovery.

In general, grantees tended to report that they provided conventional instruction to their students, although science programs tended to employ somewhat more interactive activities than math or ELA/reading programs. Across cycles and implementation years, the instructional activity implemented most frequently in the math academic summer programs was guided instruction. Among ELA/reading programs, collaborative activities (e.g., students working on group projects) were most often used among Cycle 1 grantees implementing in 2008, but by 2009, when all Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees were operational, learner-centered activities (i.e., in which students are engaged and given more responsibility for their own learning) were employed most frequently. Hands-on activities were the instructional strategies used most frequently in science programs, regardless of implementation year.

Supplemental Activities

All ISP grantees implemented additional activities in an effort to prepare teachers to provide services to an at-risk student population and to support student participation in the program. For example, the majority of ISP grantees provided professional development (PD) to participating teachers. ISP grantees also provided support services to students. Transportation to and from school and provision of snacks and food were the most frequently

reported support services in 2008 and 2009. In addition, most grantees conducted parent involvement activities. Across Cycles and implementation years, the most commonly conducted parent involvement activity was parent orientation to the ISP program.

Barriers to, and Facilitators of, Implementation

Student attitudes and behaviors, and limited resources or funding constraints, were barriers to the implementation of ISP, according to grantees in both 2008 and 2009. Additionally, 2008 grantees cited time constraints as a challenge, and grantees implementing in 2009 reported that transportation was a barrier. Case study site stakeholders noted several additional barriers, such as difficulties with curriculum delivery and student recruitment.

In both 2008 and 2009, grantees reported that supportive staff was the most important facilitator of ISP implementation. Some grantees implementing in 2008 also noted that supportive students and parents were significant facilitators of implementation. Strong collaboration among staff and with IHEs, and small class sizes and the resultant opportunities to provide individualized instruction, were also among the most important facilitators cited by grantees in 2009. Case studies corroborate these findings.

In sum, all grantees appear to have implemented ISP as intended and in alignment with program goals. In other words, grantees served the target population of students at risk for academic difficulty; offered math, science and/or ELA/reading instruction; provided services focused on helping students achieve college-readiness; partnered with IHEs; and rendered a variety of additional support services to students. In terms of implementing the various components of ISP, all grantees cited several important facilitators of implementation, including strong staff support and commitment. Although grantees faced several implementation barriers, they did not find such challenges insurmountable.

Impact of ISP on Student Outcomes: Summer 2008

- Overall, the percentage of Cycle 1 2008 high school students meeting or exceeding the standard on TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading increased significantly between 2007–08 and 2009–10.

- However, neither the TAKS-Math nor TAKS-Reading achievement of Cycle 1 2008 middle school students increased significantly between 2007–08 and 2009–10.

- Among ISP students enrolling in such courses, Algebra I, Algebra II, English I and English II pass rates were higher in 2009–10 than in 2007–08, with a corresponding reduction in course failure rates.

- Nearly three-quarters of Cycle 1 2008 students were promoted between the 2007–08 school year and the 2008–09 school year. However, the promotion rate among 2008 students declined the following year.

- Graduation rates among ISP students who were retained improved; nearly half (48%) of Grade 12 students retained in 2007–08 graduated in 2008–09.

- However, 2008 ISP students were retained in grade at a much larger percentage than across the state; 15% of the 2008 ISP students were retained in the same grade, compared to 6% of Grade 7-12 students statewide in 2008–09 (which is the closest comparison to Grade 6-12 students that was available).

- Using the Higher Education Readiness Component (HERC), the percentage of Grade 11 ISP students identified as college ready according to TAKS-Math scores increased significantly between 2007–08 and 2008–09 (although the percentage of Grade 11 ISP students identified as college ready according to TAKS-Reading scores remained stable between 2007–08 and 2008–09).

- To examine the effect of ISP participation on key outcomes, ISP students were compared with similar non-ISP students. In general, ISP students did not perform consistently better than their non-ISP peers.

- Although ISP was designed to improve the outcomes of at-risk students, such students were no more likely after ISP participation to perform well on TAKS than they were before their participation.

- Program factors, such as the number of hours students spent per day in ISP or the school level (middle school, high school, or both) served by the ISP site, did not consistently improve the likelihood that 2008 ISP students would meet the standard on TAKS-Math or TAKS-Reading.

Impact of ISP on Student Outcomes: Summer 2009

- Significantly larger percentages of both middle and high school students participating in ISP during summer 2009 met the standard on both TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading/ELA following their ISP participation than had met the standard before ISP participation.

- Larger percentages of Cycle 1 high school students participating in ISP for the first time in 2009, and Cycle 2 high school students, passed Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, English I and English II following ISP participation than had prior to ISP. (It should be noted that these are not cohort data wherein ISP students are tracked year to year, but rather are the percentage of ISP students overall who passed or failed specific courses each year.)

- Between 81% (Cycle 2) and 87% (Cycle 1) of 2009 ISP students were promoted to the next grade, and between 7% (Cycle 1) and 9% (Cycle 2) were retained in 2009–10 (compared to 6% of Grade 7-12 students statewide in 2008–09, the closest comparison to Grade 6-12 students). Less than 1% of 2009 students dropped out. (Percentages do not total to 100% because some students leave for other reasons besides dropping out or graduating, such as relocating to another LEA).

- Overall, smaller percentages of Cycle 2 than Cycle 1 2009 students were college ready at baseline. However, whereas the percentage of Cycle 1 students classified as college ready decreased between 2008–09 and 2009–10 (from 61% to 55% in math, and from

77% to 73% in ELA/reading), the percentage of Cycle 2 students determined to be college ready increased between 2008–09 and 2009–10 (from 16% to 39% in math, and from 44% to 54% in ELA/reading).

- Although ISP was designed to improve the outcomes of at-risk students, such students were no more likely to perform well on TAKS following ISP participation than they were before ISP.

- Program factors, such as the number of hours students spent per day in ISP or the level of school (middle school, high school, or both) served by the ISP site, did not consistently improve the likelihood that 2009 ISP students would meet the standard on TAKS-Math or TAKS-Reading.

Impact of ISP on Teacher Effectiveness

- All Cycle 1 projects, and all but one Cycle 2 project, that implemented during summer 2009 included teacher PD as part of their strategy for helping students improve their academic achievement, according to progress reports.

- Overall, 38% of surveyed teachers reported that they did not receive any training prior to ISP implementation. Of those teachers who did receive training (n=153), 61% found it *very helpful,* and 38% found the training *somewhat helpful*, for their role as a teacher in ISP.

- Teachers (79%) and administrators (100%) indicated that participation in the ISP improved teacher effectiveness at their schools, including instruction and assessment skills.

- A larger percentage of ELA/reading teachers than math and science teachers indicated that the ISP program positively affected their instructional skills, whereas larger percentages of science and math teachers than ELA/reading teachers indicated that ISP improved their assessment skills.

- Larger percentages of middle school than high school teachers reported that the ISP program impacted their instructional and assessment skills.

Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability of ISP

- By April 30, 2010, Cycle 1 grantees had spent an average of 83% of their awarded amounts. Cycle 2 grantees had expended an average of 49% of their awarded amounts within this timeframe, leaving 51% for their remaining year of implementation.

- Both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees budgeted the largest average portion of their awards to payroll costs.

- Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 ISP sites expended, on average, less than they budgeted in most categories, with two exceptions: Grantees spent slightly more on capital outlays, and substantially more on administrative costs, than they had anticipated.

- ISP was not a cost-effective grant program, at least for Cycle 1 grantees, because there was no conclusive evidence to support that ISP had significant positive effects on desired student outcomes.

- ISP, at a cost of $973 per student over two years, costs less than similar dropout prevention programs that also focus on summer academic remediation. For example, the Summer Training and Education Program (STEP), was reported to cost $2,455 per student each summer of participation, which is a much higher cost than ISP.

- A state grant program in Texas called the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) program includes summer intervention but also follows targeted students throughout the school year, providing further targeted intervention as needed. The median cost per student for TNGTI was $781 for one year, which is less than the average of $973 that ISP cost for two years. Eventually, TNGTI will likely cost more than ISP over a two-year period. However, TNGTI may better meet the needs of students at risk of dropping out because it requires grantees to continue to track students throughout the school year, although further evaluation of TNGTI is also needed.

Conclusions and Next Steps for ISP

The ISP Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 projects were implemented as planned. The projects targeted and served at-risk student populations. This included students who were classified as at risk, economically disadvantaged students, and Hispanic students. Implementation activities were aligned to the overall goals of the ISP program. ISP projects incorporated instructional activities in the core content areas that have been found to be effective with at-risk students. In addition, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 projects implemented PD activities for teachers and parent involvement activities, both of which are associated with increasing student achievement and reducing dropout. The inclusion of support services to assist students with college counseling, providing food at the ISP project, and providing transportation to and from ISP activities was a strong component of the ISP program.

Findings indicate that the ISP program had a limited impact on student outcomes. In some cases, outcomes did improve. For example, the TAKS achievement of 2009 ISP middle and high school students improved significantly in both math and ELA/reading. However, consistent gains were not found in grade retention rates as compared to state levels, in promotion or graduation rates, or in terms of college readiness. Moreover, ISP did not appear to have a lasting impact on the target population, at-risk youth. According to these analyses, the brief, albeit intensive, summer programs funded by ISP may not have possessed the requisite power to overcome the challenges faced by at-risk students.