



Selected Reports on LEAP (Language Enrichment Activities Program)

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SMU Press Release (excerpts)
March 2003

Leap Data Gives Clout to Head Start Programs

Parents and policymakers have always valued Head Start's mission to close the achievement gap early to avoid frustrated students dropping out of school later. Until the Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) came along, however, empirical data proving Head Start's potential was lacking. In 1993, at the request of the Texas Instruments Foundation, Nell Carvell, Director of SMU's LEAP and Head Start Initiative, developed the program, initially implementing it at the Margaret Cone Head Start Center in Dallas. The results were immediate, and LEAP is now a model curriculum for Head Start programs nationwide. A preschool environment steeped in language is the key to LEAP's success. "A language-rich curriculum produces outstanding results for children from poverty," Carvell testified to Congress on March 6. "And LEAP has the hard data to back this up."

In addition to members of Congress, First Lady Laura Bush has lauded LEAP for its success in preparing children to read before they enter kindergarten. Despite overwhelming poverty, the children who attended the Cone Center and go to the nearby Dallas Independent School District, Julia C. Frazier Elementary School, are testing at levels that rival their peers in wealthy suburban schools (see the graphs that follow).

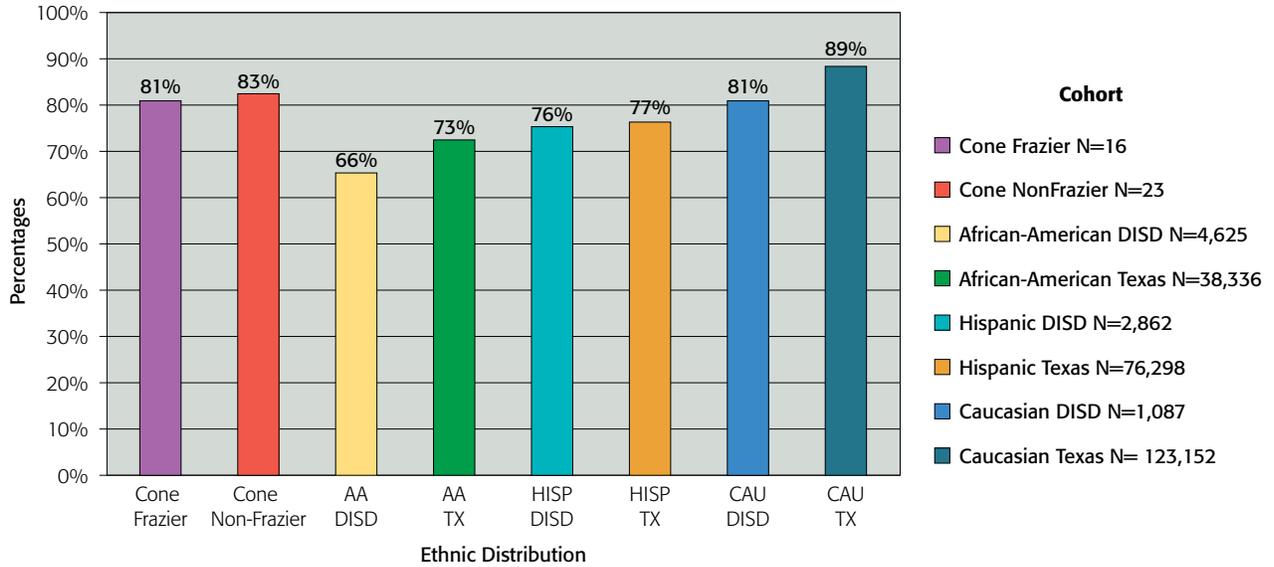
In 1994, kindergarteners who attended the Cone Center as preschoolers scored, on average, in the 20th to 30th percentile on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS). Since LEAP's implementation, student scores have increased to the 60th and 70th percentile.

On the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), a statewide measure of academic knowledge, students who attended the Cone Center pre-school program scored, on average, 15 percentage points higher than their peers at Frazier who did not attend the Cone Center. For the past five years (1999–2002), 80 percent or more of the Cone/Frazier children have passed TAAS reading and TAAS math.

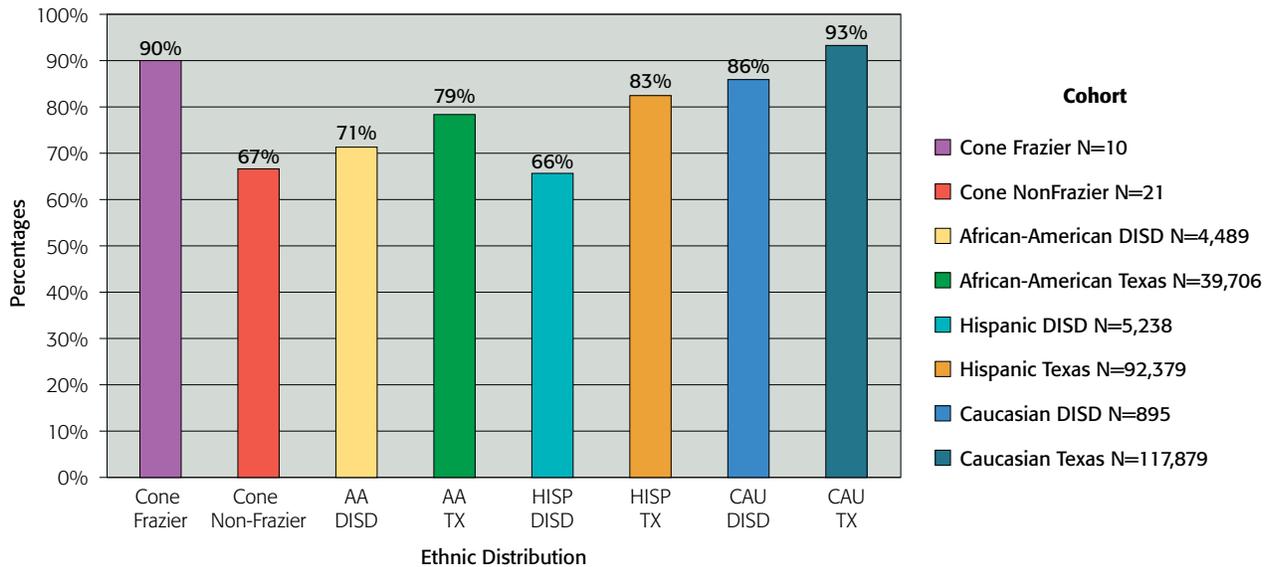
By the end of the 2001–02 school year, 90 percent of the LEAP children at Frazier were reading at grade level, helping the school earn an "Exemplary" ranking from the Texas Education Agency.

By May 2003, approximately 45,000 children and 1,100 teachers nationwide benefitted from the LEAP curriculum and its teacher training component. In addition to Texas, schools and Head Start programs in California and Alabama have adopted the program for their preschoolers.

**Margaret H. Cone Head Start Center
1997-98 Cohort 4, Grade 3
Distribution of students who passed Reading TAAS (70 and above)**



**Margaret H. Cone Head Start Center
1999-2000 Cohort 6, Grade 3
Distribution of students who passed Reading TAAS (70 and above)**



Dallas Independent School District, Division of Evaluation and Accountability LEAP (2004–05)

Nancy Kihnerman, Executive Director, Special Projects; Robert Medrano, Asst. Superintendent, Office of Evaluation; Celilia Oakeley, Associate Superintendent, Division of Evaluation and Accountability

SUMMARY

The Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) was introduced into the Dallas Independent School District (DISD) in the fall of 2002 and used throughout the school year and the following school year. This report assesses the second full year of implementation for the school year 2004–05. It describes the program results and the positive impact on the children enrolled at that time in prekindergarten.

During the 2004–05 school year, the district offered prekindergarten in full-day programs at 66 schools and offered half-day programs at 72 schools. The combined full-day and half-day programs served 7,198 prekindergarten students: 75 percent Hispanic, 22 percent African American, and the remaining 3 percent white, Asian American, or Native American. Ninety-one percent of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Approximately 57 percent of the students had limited English proficiency (LEP).

The results of the focus group sessions and survey at a prekindergarten coaches and mentors retreat, held in late January 2005, revealed that teachers were taking ownership of the curriculum and were consistently implementing its concepts and skills. Coaches and mentors believed that their work contributed significantly to the quality of the program and that teachers appreciated their work. Survey responses indicated that coaches and mentors frequently observed key elements of the curriculum in the classrooms, and prekindergarten instruction was consistent with the goals of DISD and Southern Methodist University (SMU) training.

Two sets of quantitative measures, *DIAL-3* and *Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS/Logramos)*, demonstrated the program's effectiveness. *DIAL-3* was administered both as a pre-test and post-test to assess the presence of skills and abilities that are known as predecessors to reading and other academic development. On average, children in DISD began the year far below the national norm on the indicators in the domains of motor, language, and concepts. Their mean score on the language domain was equivalent to the eighth percentile. In the spring 2005, the mean score has risen dramatically to the 58th percentile.

The significance of the gain scores was that, as a group, DISD prekindergarten children began their kindergarten year well above the national norm on these measures. Without LEAP, most of these children would have begun kindergarten demonstrating potential learning delays and would have been far behind their peers nationally.

To assess whether the effects suggested by *DIAL-3* remained during the kindergarten year, multiple regression analysis of student scores on *ITBS* and *Logramos* assessments in kindergarten compared the children who attended a district prekindergarten to those who did not. The results indicated a significant positive effect of the program on reading and math scores on these national assessments. On average, students in DISD began the year far below the national norm on indicators of the domains of motor, language and concepts. In the fall, the mean score on the language domain was equivalent to the eighth percentile rank, but was at the 58th percentile in the spring. Similar gains were demonstrated on the other domains as well. (see attached)

The Dallas ISD Early Childhood Department continued to emphasize the importance of a LEAP-based curriculum and provided continuing support and training for the program. The department supported a comprehensive training program, supplemented by coaching and mentoring, to ensure consistent delivery of quality instructional content and methods. In the Dallas ISD's final report the following recommendations were provided by the Division of Evaluation and Accountability to support the continued improvement of the program:

- to increase the awareness by principals of the curriculum content and methods,
- to increase support from the coaches and mentors* and the quantitative results of the program,
- to continue the expansion of half-day programs into full-day programs, and
- to support and expand the Early Childhood Department's coaching and mentoring program.

**Three classroom teachers per area, in seven of the eight district areas, served as mentors during 2004–05. One area did not participate in the study because the pre-K classrooms were part of a Montessori program. Mentor teacher responsibilities included participation in monthly LEAP training, and planning and providing monthly training for teachers in their district areas. Mentors' classrooms were used as models or demonstration classrooms for teachers needing assistance. Two days during the year, mentors were given time off from their classroom teaching duties to visit prekindergarten sites in their areas, where they modeled LEAP lessons and/or met with teachers.*

Coaches worked as part-time district employees (approximately 25–30 hours per week/flexible schedules). These coaches were experts in the area of early childhood, particularly prekindergarten, but were not currently teaching full-time in the classroom. They attended LEAP training meetings with mentor teachers and Early Childhood specialists and often helped with the area training provided by mentors. They observed prekindergarten teachers in the classroom, modeled LEAP lessons, and provided assistance upon teacher request or as deemed necessary by mentors and the Early Childhood Department. Coaches met monthly with Early Childhood and LEAP personnel from SMU, serving as the primary liaison between Early Childhood specialists and mentor teachers.

Dallas Independent School District,
 Approved Report of the Division
 of Evaluation and Accountability: LEAP

Table 1
DIAL-3 Results Fall 2004, Spring 2005
NCE Scores by Domain

	Fall			Spring		
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.
Area 1						
Motor	830	43.89	23.742	830	80.35	17.489
Concepts	830	20.92	18.160	830	50.46	23.221
Language	830	16.81	17.066	830	51.29	26.134
Total	830	22.67	17.614	830	62.84	23.913
Area 2						
Motor	318	47.49	24.323	318	80.07	18.388
Concepts	318	32.67	21.275	318	59.73	20.388
Language	318	31.08	22.941	318	61.61	22.625
Total	318	34.25	21.879	318	71.05	22.027
Area 3						
Motor	708	40.18	23.674	708	81.21	18.872
Concepts	708	19.50	16.270	708	52.99	21.119
Language	708	17.36	16.545	708	53.45	23.870
Total	708	21.10	17.007	708	65.11	22.199
Area 4						
Motor	668	52.06	23.124	668	83.07	16.395
Concepts	668	32.06	21.665	668	59.26	21.003
Language	668	30.97	22.997	668	60.67	22.927
Total	668	35.48	22.297	668	71.98	21.794

	Fall			Spring		
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.
Area 5						
Motor	59	85.47	13.734	59	93.71	11.727
Concepts	59	63.85	19.719	59	72.69	17.204
Language	59	61.83	27.613	59	82.75	20.278
Total	59	74.36	20.645	59	89.93	14.405
Area 6						
Motor	863	42.42	22.880	863	78.98	18.401
Concepts	863	20.70	18.309	863	50.89	21.604
Language	863	17.75	16.594	863	49.92	23.979
Total	863	22.18	17.233	863	61.67	22.232
Area 7						
Motor	983	39.39	22.168	983	79.89	17.142
Concepts	983	18.61	16.142	983	45.43	21.005
Language	983	15.78	16.119	983	46.71	24.285
Total	983	19.77	16.747	983	58.21	21.685
Area 8						
Motor	789	45.32	22.419	789	81.76	16.615
Concepts	789	21.99	17.940	789	54.01	21.749
Language	789	22.69	18.653	789	59.09	24.276
Total	789	25.46	17.828	789	67.78	21.637
Charter						
Motor	73	49.07	24.732	73	85.25	14.643
Concepts	73	28.36	19.757	73	58.70	19.618
Language	73	21.73	23.413	73	49.41	20.755
Total	73	29.45	21.357	73	67.63	19.501

	Fall			Spring		
	N	Mean	S.D.	N	Mean	S.D.
997 ¹						
Motor	55	42.13	28.085	55	75.67	22.279
Concepts	55	28.67	22.153	55	50.73	24.967
Language	55	25.44	21.196	55	56.11	25.784
Total	55	28.80	23.186	55	62.91	26.173
DISD All						
Motor	5346	44.29	5346	5346	80.86	17.629
Concepts	5346	23.18	5346	5346	52.47	22.082
Language	5346	20.99	5346	5346	53.82	24.861
Total	5346	25.28	19.863	5346	64.82	22.776

Note: ¹997 is a code used to account for students who have withdrawn from one campus, but who have not yet re-enrolled in another DISD campus.

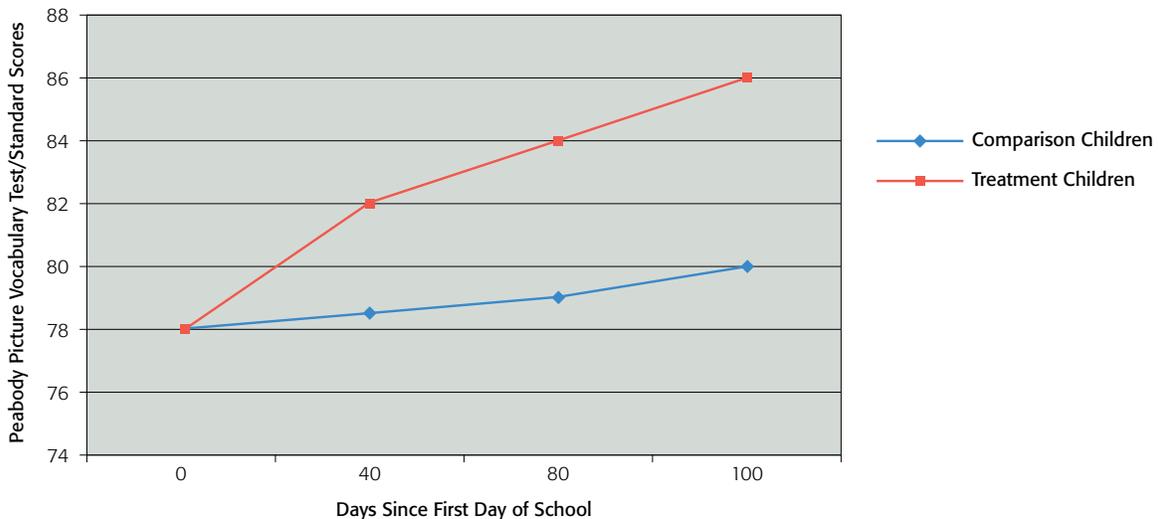
Gain scores for each DISD area are shown in the chart above. Although the gains across the district were remarkably large, language score gains in Areas 1, 3, and 8 were 35 points or more. On the Concepts domain, Areas 1, 3, 6, and 8 had gains of 30 or more points.

Analysis of Child Outcome Data LEAP Implementation 2003–04

The following information provides a description of the child outcome measures used in assessing the impact of the Language Enrichment Activities Program (LEAP) and professional development on child outcomes in CCMS classrooms during the 2003–04 school year.

To determine the impact of the LEAP program and teacher training on child outcomes, two child outcome measures were administered to children, ranging in age from 3–4 years old, in two randomized groups containing treatment and control subjects. The (PPVT) Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–Version III and the Expressive Vocabulary Test were administered during the fall of 2003 and the spring of 2004. In the spring of 2004, the growth in receptive vocabulary by students from LEAP classrooms was greater than the growth from children in comparison classrooms. Figure 1 shows the comparative growth between treatment and comparison groups.

Figure 1. Growth Rates on Receptive Vocabulary



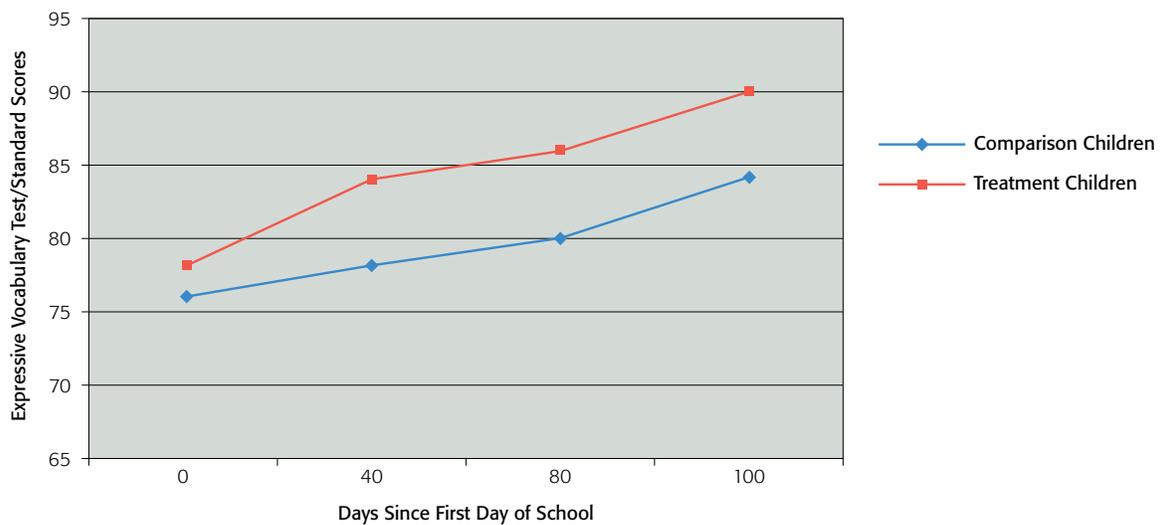
To examine the impact of LEAP training on children’s expressive language skills, the Expressive Vocabulary Test was administered by trained data collectors during the fall of 2003 and the spring

*Child Care Management Services (CCMS) is a program managed by Child Care Associates through a contract with the Workforce Development Board. Child Care Associates of Dallas consists primarily of in-home care services provided by paraprofessionals. There are a few center-type programs, but they are headed by paraprofessionals. In order for children to qualify for these services, parents must be working and living at or below the poverty level of income.

of 2004. Analysis of data revealed that children from LEAP classrooms made greater gains in expressive language than those from comparison classrooms.

Figure 2 shows the comparative growth between treatment and comparison groups. Analysis of data revealed that children from LEAP classrooms made greater gains in Receptive language than did children from comparison classrooms.

Figure 2. Growth Rates on Expressive Vocabulary



In both receptive and expressive vocabulary, children in the LEAP classrooms outperformed those in the control group (non-LEAP classrooms).