



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Office of Inspector General



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Report No. A-11/12-13

Supplemental Educational Services Leon County School District

Executive Summary

We reviewed the Supplemental Educational Services program in Leon County School District to determine if the tutoring services provided are effective in improving student academic achievement. The results of our audit revealed that the program is beneficial and effective in enhancing the academic achievement of students.

Our analysis revealed that significant learning gains were realized. Despite difficulties in obtaining reliable data for our analysis, we found that the majority of students sampled either met or exceeded the district's targeted levels of achievement for the 2011-2012 school year. Our study showed an overall success rate of 82%, with an average percentage point increase in test scores of 25 points for our sample of Leon County students who participated in the program.

Background

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) is a state-wide program that provides tutoring, remediation, and other supplemental academic help in subjects that include reading, language arts, and math. The services are provided free of charge outside of the regular school day—before or after school or on weekends.

Prior to the 2012-2013 school year, students from low income families were eligible to receive SES services if they qualified for the free or reduced-price lunch program and were enrolled in a Title I school that was designated as in need of improvement. Currently, SES services are provided to students attending Title I schools who are performing at Level 1 or Level 2 on the Florida



Comprehensive Assessment Test. Eligible SES providers include non-profit entities, for-profit entities, local educational agencies, public schools, private schools, charter

schools, faith-based organizations, and public or private institutions of higher learning. A list of state-approved SES providers is made available to parents by the school district.

For the 2010-2011 school year, nearly 750,000 students in Florida were eligible to receive SES services; approximately 102,000 students applied and 74,000 students actually received services. In Leon County School District (District), nearly 8,000 students applied for SES services in 2011-2012; a total of 1,200 students were enrolled and received tutoring services. The District's SES waiting list averages over 6,000 students and many students are unable to take advantage of tutoring services.

The objective of this audit was to determine whether the SES program in Leon County School District was effective in improving student academic achievement during the 2011-2012 school year. No Child Left Behind guidelines stipulate that SES providers offer high-quality, research-based instructional services and have a proven record of effectiveness in increasing student academic achievement.

In Leon County, Student Learning Plans (SLP) are used to outline the specific achievement goals for each SES student and include a strategy and timetable for improving performance. To measure student academic progress, each school district tests SES students both before and after tutoring services have been provided. The instruments used to measure performance may vary from provider to provider. Effective September 1, 2011, new legislation gave school districts the authority to select acceptable pre- and post-methods for measuring the learning gains of students enrolled in SES. Previously, individual SES providers administered their own pre- and post-tests. As of the end of the 2011-2012 school year, only Leon, Miami-Dade, and Okaloosa County school districts had opted to implement the new test standardization and administer the test themselves. The District has chosen to use the SAT-10 (Stanford Achievement Test) pre-tests and post-tests. The District has selected a third-party testing contractor (the testing company) to administer these assessments.

For the 2011-2012 school year, pre-tests were given in Leon County before the start of tutoring to establish a baseline for measuring student progress. The testing company electronically created a “draft SLP” for each student based on pre-test scores. This draft SLP was then reviewed by SES providers who were required to consult with school district staff members and parents of enrolled children to develop the Approved SLP. The final Approved SLP for each student consisted of three goals which addressed specific deficiencies based on the weakest areas of the pre-test and/or district input. Each goal was tied to a specific measurable performance objective (Next Generation Sunshine State Standard Benchmark). Students were pre-tested on many skills in the subject areas of language arts and mathematics. However, providers were limited to tutoring on three goals based on the weakest areas of performance on the pre-test.

Upon completion of SES tutoring, the testing company gave a post-test which was identical to the instrument used for the pre-test. The target goal was set by individual providers and approved by the District. The District approved a minimum goal for each student corresponding to a score of

five percentage points above the pre-test score. This goal was established because this was the District’s first year to implement the standardized testing. The difference between the target goal and the post-test score was used to determine student proficiency.

Results

To evaluate the effectiveness of the SES program, we compared pre- and post-test results for SES students in the District for the 2011-2012 school year. We examined score reports from the testing company to determine the success rate of students in the program. We also reviewed the Approved SLPs and Monthly Progress Reports on the District’s SES database (EZSES) to ensure that the subject matter on which students were tested actually corresponded to what they were taught by providers.

Approximately 300 students took the post-test during the first testing cycle in early 2012. However, we were only able to analyze the data for 207 students. We discarded nearly one-third of our original sample due to problems with the sample data. Examples of problems we encountered include:

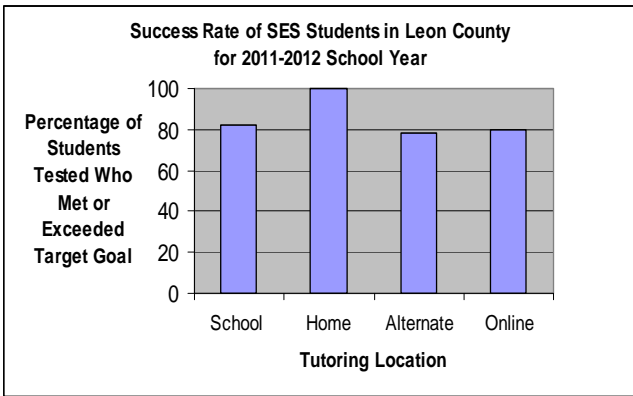
- Subject area(s) in which some students were tested did not always mirror the area(s) in which students were tutored;
- Many test scores were missing from the testing company’s score report or from EZSES;
- Student goal descriptions listed on the student’s Approved SLP did not always match those on the testing company’s score report; and
- Numerous discrepancies were found between the test scores reported on EZSES and the testing company.

Ultimately, we were instructed by the District to rely upon the test results provided by the testing

company. Our results include only two-thirds of the original sample.

Of the 207 students sampled, 72% students were tutored at school, 2% in the home, 13% online, and 13% at alternate facility. Each student was tutored and tested on three goals as specified on the Approved SLP. A student was considered successful if he/she met or exceeded the District's target goal, a score of five percentage points above the pre-test score.

Success rates were calculated by dividing the number of goals met or exceeded by the total number of goals for each tutoring location/mode. Students tutored on a school campus achieved a success rate of 82%. Students tutored in the home had a success rate of 100%. Students tutored online had a success rate of 80%. Finally, students tutored at an alternate facility achieved a success rate of 78%. Of the 621 goals analyzed, the majority of the goals were met or exceeded to give an overall program success rate of 82% (509 goals met out of 621). We also calculated the difference between the pre- and post-test scores for each student. The overall average percentage point increase for all students was 25 points, well above the minimum 5 points targeted level of improvement.



Methodology

This audit was conducted in accordance with *The International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* published by the Institute of Internal Auditors. The audit team achieved these audit standards by:

- Researching and reviewing applicable laws, statutes, rules, policies, and guidance;
- Reviewing all Department guidance to include the SES Request for Application;
- Reviewing the 2011-2012 SES Master Contract with Providers for Leon County Schools;
- Reviewing the District's 2011-2012 contract with the testing company;
- Analyzing test score data obtained from the testing company, the District, and EZSES;
- Conducting interviews with staff members in the Program Office and Department management;
- Interviewing the SES Director and secretary in the District office; and
- Conducting on-site observations of SES tutoring sessions at local schools.

Closing Comments

The Office of the Inspector General would like to thank Department management and staff for their assistance during the course of this audit. We were also impressed with the professionalism and dedication from staff at the SES District Office in Leon County. The District SES Director and secretary were very cooperative and helpful throughout the course of this audit.