

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Grant Program: Interim Evaluation Report



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Executive Summary

The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program is a statewide initiative designed to reach ninth graders identified as at risk for dropping out of school and prepare them for academic and behavioral success in high school. TNGTI grants provide funding for districts to implement three types of support for identified students: (1) a summer transition program to introduce incoming ninth graders to high school culture and to develop their academic, social, and study skills; (2) an early warning data system to monitor program participants throughout the school year; and (3) fall and spring interventions to provide additional support to struggling students identified through the early warning data system. In 2009–10, 23 districts and 63 campuses are participating in the program.

TEA contracted with Learning Point Associates and its partner, Gibson Consulting Group Inc., to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the initial year of the TNGTI grant program. The evaluation began in June 2009 and is expected to continue through May 2011. The objectives of the evaluation are to

1. Describe and evaluate the implementation of program strategies.
2. Evaluate the impact of the program on student outcomes.
3. Evaluate the impact of the program on teacher and staff effectiveness.
4. Determine the cost effectiveness and sustainability of the program.

The focus of the interim report is to address the first research objective and to describe and evaluate the implementation of program strategies. An initial description is also presented on the perceived impact of the program on students and teachers, touching on the second and third research objectives.

Data and Methods

This report is based on data collected from participating districts and campuses in August and September 2009. Findings are based on information from four main data sources: the first campus progress report, first student data collection, summer interviews with district and program staff, and observations of summer transition activities. Additional data on participating campuses were obtained from the TNGTI grant applications, district and campus administrative data, and from TEA. A descriptive analysis was conducted on the quantitative data collected from the campus progress report, student upload data, and other available data. The quotes and examples provided are based on the qualitative data collected from the interviews and observations conducted at a sample of eight participating campuses.

Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings focus on three topics: district and campus planning for the entire TNGTI program, planning and implementation of the summer transition program, and planning for the early warning data system and related intervention services. A summary of findings follows, along with several suggestions for improvement from campus participants.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Program Goals. Individual campus goals for the TNGTI program varied widely from generic to specific, but the majority of grantees listed academic preparation in core subject areas as the top goal of their ninth-grade transition programs. Less emphasis was placed on parent activities in campus goals.

High School and Middle School Collaboration. High school and middle school staff most often collaborated by discussing strategies for identifying program participants and recruiting students into the program. Notably, five campuses reported no collaboration between the high school and middle school staff. In districts with multiple campuses, most high school campuses planned program activities to address the needs of their specific student population (rather than adopt a districtwide approach).

Student Identification and Recruitment. Two primary strategies were used by campuses to identify students for the summer transition program. First, most campuses specifically targeted individuals who they thought could benefit from the program on the basis of identified needs, most often academic. Students were identified on the basis of eighth-grade TAKS scores and other sources of data (e.g., core course grades, excessive absences, disciplinary issues). Second, some campuses also broadly advertised the summer transition program so that students (or their parents) could sign up to participate. The recruitment strategy most frequently mentioned was for staff members to communicate with the parents of identified students through telephone calls, letters, and conferences.

Identified Student Information. The majority of students who were identified and who participated in the program had met the minimum requirements on the eighth-grade TAKS exams but still had poor overall scores. A low percentage of participating students passed the TAKS in mathematics and science, which may have led to several campuses choosing to offer summer transition activities specifically targeting science and mathematics preparation.

FINDINGS:

Collaboration between middle school and high school staff was key to student recruitment.

Campuses reported the collaboration with the middle schools was most helpful for identifying and recruiting students. Many campuses noted the middle school staff were less involved in other aspects of program planning.

Some campuses reported problems identifying and recruiting students. Some campuses had difficulties identifying and recruiting students from factors such as unavailable test data and lack of cooperation from middle schools. Overlapping summer programs that targeted the same students was also cited as a challenge for recruitment.

SUGGESTIONS:

Provide information about grant funding earlier to allow more planning time. Several campuses mentioned that they could have done more with the summer program if there had been more time to plan and recruit students. Campuses requested more advance notice of grant timelines and budgets to get an earlier start on planning.

THE SUMMER TRANSITION PROGRAM

Program Length and Timing. The majority of campuses offered a summer transition program for at least two weeks (10 days), and most programs were held in June or August. Nearly half the campuses conducted their programs in conjunction with another program, most often an academic remediation program (e.g., summer school).

Activities Offered. The summer transition programs offered a wide variety of activities; common activities were high school orientations and academic instruction, and less common activities were community service and college site visits.

Student Participation. Student participation was a challenge for many campuses. Only 67% of students who were identified actually attended at least one day of the summer transition program. Those students who participated in the program attended nine days on average and most often attended sessions in social skills and core subjects (e.g., mathematics, reading, science). Program staff indicated that when student participation was low, it was often due to scheduling conflicts with family plans or other summer programs (e.g., remediation courses).

Parental Involvement. Most campuses offered one or more parent outreach activities, such as information sessions, conferences, or classes, but parent participation was low.

Success Factors and Perceived Impact. Campuses identified the most effective activities for preparing students for ninth grade as training in study skills, orientation activities, and peer relationship building. Program staff reported the benefit of the program for students was lower fear and anxiety about high school, friendships with classmates, and improvement in academic skills. Teachers also benefited by meeting the students and identifying their strengths and weaknesses before school began. About half the campuses had not offered a transition program before 2009, and even those who had offered a similar program reported the TNGTI grant program offered new and more activities than previous programs. The most commonly mentioned factor associated with a program's success was the availability of staff and their enthusiasm for the program.

FINDINGS:

Student participation was a major challenge for many campuses. Many campuses did not meet their original target numbers for student participation. Participation was affected by overlapping summer programs or by other plans the students had (e.g., vacations, migrant families).

Campuses reported low parent participation. Despite efforts to encourage their involvement, parents often were not involved in program activities. Campuses indicated they would like help to increase parent involvement.

The availability and enthusiasm of staff members are key to program success. Nearly half the campuses mentioned that having available staff members (e.g., teachers, grant coordinators) was critical for program success. Campuses also mentioned the importance of getting enthusiastic and committed staff members in the program, which was conveyed to students and increased their engagement with the program.

SUGGESTIONS:

Continue Summer Transition Program. Most campuses said the TNGTI program was beneficial and would like to continue activities next summer.

THE EARLY WARNING DATA SYSTEM AND INTERVENTION SERVICES

Early Warning Data System. In their grant applications, almost all schools included measures related to attendance, behavior, and academic performance that would be used to monitor the progress of participating students throughout the year. All but a few campuses indicated that the early warning data system was ready for the fall 2009 semester. The majority of campuses reported that the early warning data system would be used to monitor TNGTI program participants differently from other ninth-grade students, most often by using the early warning data system measures and by assigning specific staff members to monitor TNGTI students. Overall, program staff reported confidence in the system and agreed they were ready to use it for the school year. Additional data on the implementation of this system will be provided in the final report.

Interventions. About half the campuses reported the planned interventions for TNGTI participants would be different from those planned for other ninth-grade students. The most common differences would be more frequent parent contact, the use of additional support staff, specific classes offered, additional tutoring, and more frequent student-teacher conferences. Most program staff indicated that clear methods were in place for delivering and evaluating the success of the interventions, staff were assigned and trained to deliver interventions, and a process had been put in place to inform students and parents when the early warning data system identified a need for intervention. The final report will provide additional data on the implementation of intervention services.

FINDINGS:

Most campuses had planned for the implementation of an early warning data system and interventions. Preliminary information on planning for these two components of the TNGTI program showed that campuses were ready to begin monitoring and providing intervention services to TNGTI students. The final report will provide further information on implementation.

SUGGESTIONS:

Some campuses would like more support for the early warning data system. Several campuses offered suggestions such as creating a tool that is more compatible with their current monitoring systems, allowing more time at the beginning of the year to implement the system, and more support from the district to ease data extraction.

Next Steps

To assess program implementation and to evaluate the impact of the TNGTI program on teachers, the evaluation team will conduct descriptive analyses of additional student participation data, data from campus progress reports, and staff surveys. Thematic analysis of additional interview data also will be conducted. To assess the program's impact on students, two sets of analyses will be conducted: (1) a comparison of the outcomes of students participating in the program with those of similar students who are not participating in program and (2) an analysis of program components and factors associated with greater improvements in student outcomes. Analyses of the cost effectiveness of the program also will be conducted. Findings will be presented in a final evaluation report to TEA in September 2010.

Introduction

This interim report on the evaluation of the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program provides a description of implementation strategies being employed by districts and campuses participating in the program in 2009–10. Implementation findings are based on data collected in summer and fall 2009 from the following sources: (1) an initial campus progress report completed by TNGTI campuses; (2) data on students participating in the program provided by participating districts and campuses; (3) interviews with district and campus program staff at selected sites; and (4) observations of summer transition activities at selected sites. Administrative data for students participating in the program and data from TNGTI grant applications also are used to provide additional information about campus programs and student participants.

An overview of the legislation authorizing the grant program is first presented, followed by a review of the literature on ninth-grade dropout and retention, and a description of the TNGTI grant program. A summary of evaluation objectives and activities is then presented, followed by a description of the methods used in collecting and analyzing the data presented in this report. Following this, findings from data collected in summer and fall 2009 are summarized. The implications of these findings are discussed and next steps in the evaluation are presented at the end of the report.

Legislative Background and History

The TNGTI grant program is funded through the General Appropriations Act, Article III, Rider 53(b) (80th Texas Legislative, Regular Session, 2007), which allocated \$25 million per year for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for programs targeting students at risk of dropping out of high school. The program is supported by the High School Completion and Success Initiative Council, which was established in 2007 with the passage of House Bill 2237 (HB 2237, 80th Texas Legislature, Regular Session). HB 2237 charged the Council with developing a strategic plan “to improve effectiveness, coordination, and alignment of high school completion and college and workforce readiness efforts” (HB 2237 §39.352(a) and §39.357(a)).

Adopted in March 2008, the Council’s strategic plan was designed to (1) reduce high school dropout rates; (2) improve postsecondary success; (3) and close achievement gaps among students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups. Objectives for achieving these goals include support for interventions that “provide structured and purposeful extracurricular, after school, summer, and related programs aimed at increasing student engagement with, and participation in, the school community for students at risk for dropping out”; “provide students with appropriate academic and social support to address issues related to the risk of dropping out”; and “provide opportunities to...increase student and parental awareness of rigorous high school and college standards and of college preparation programs and activities” (High School Completion and Success Initiative Council, 2008, pp. 15–17). The plan places a priority on serving economically disadvantaged students and students with academic deficiencies who are at risk of dropping out of high school. The TNGTI program is one of several programs implemented under the Council’s strategic plan. All programs supported by the Council must be evaluated to provide data on program effectiveness and to inform program modifications and improvements.

The TNGTI program is an ambitious effort to improve high school graduation rates and the college and workforce readiness of high school graduates in the state. Although the Texas Education Agency (TEA) reported a four-year graduation rate of 79.1% for students in the class of 2008,¹ graduation rates varied significantly across student groups (Texas Education Agency, 2009b). Asians and Pacific Islanders had the highest graduation rate (91.2%), and Hispanics had the lowest graduation rate (70.8%). The graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students was also low (70.4%). Among students from this ninth-grade cohort who dropped out of high school, African American students and economically disadvantaged students had the highest longitudinal dropout rates (16.1% and 15.7%, respectively). The Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center (2006) reported that half of all nongraduates in Texas left school during their freshman year in 2003. Research has also shown that in the majority of states, including Texas, students are more likely to drop out of school in ninth grade than in later grades (EPE Research Center, 2006; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007).

Overview of the Literature on Ninth-Grade Retention and Dropout

Recent research on dropout prevention indicates that the ninth grade is the “make or break year” for students to be on track to graduate (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Herlihy, 2007; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007). More students fail ninth grade than any other grade in high school, and a disproportionate number of students who are held back in ninth grade subsequently drop out (Herlihy, 2007). The transition into a larger school system with a different structure, new teachers and peers, and more challenging coursework is often associated with poor grades in core subjects, declines in student achievement, failure to be promoted to the next grade, student disengagement in the classroom, behavioral problems, and declines in student motivation (Alspaugh, 1998; Herlihy, 2007; Isakson & Jarvis, 1999; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007).

In addition to the academic demands of high school, students report facing a variety of new nonacademic challenges upon their arrival in high school. Researchers Barber and Olsen (2004) found that ninth graders perceive less support and monitoring from teachers and principals and generally like school less than they did in middle school. In another study, middle school students identified academic ability as especially important to their success in secondary school; after they entered high school,

¹ The graduation rate was calculated for the cohort of students who entered ninth grade in 2004–05. TEA adopted the national dropout definition in 2005–06. Students from this cohort who left school in 2004–05 without graduating were subject to a different dropout definition from the definition for students in later cohorts. TEA notes that “Completion rates for classes in which the national dropout definition is being phased in (i.e., classes of 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009) are not comparable to rates for the class of 2005 and prior classes, nor are they comparable to each other” (Texas Education Agency, 2009b, p. ix). Other methods for calculating graduation rates have yielded lower estimates for the state. Using a method known as the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI), the EPE Research Center (2009) reported a graduation rate of 65.3% for the Texas class of 2006, the most recent year for which the data analyzed were available. The national graduation rate for this cohort of students was estimated at 69.2%. The Center reported that fewer than 60% of African American and Hispanic students in this cohort graduated with a regular high school diploma in 2006. The Center’s analyses are based on data from the Common Core of Data, an annual census of public schools and school districts in the United States conducted by the U.S. Department of Education.

however, students identified additional components essential to success in school, including time management, ability to stay on task, social skills, and behavior (Zeedyk et al., 2003). In this same study, students reported that social concerns, such as bullying and establishing high school peer relationships, often overshadowed concerns about academics. Similarly, Akos and Galassi (2004) found that students' greatest concerns about starting high school revolved around the amount of homework, class difficulty, and organizational issues (e.g., getting lost).

Allensworth and Easton's (2007) study, *What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools*, shows that academically weak high school freshmen who reported a positive ninth-grade academic experience graduated at nearly twice the rate of freshmen with strong academics who reported a negative ninth-grade academic experience, revealing just how critical school-level factors are in determining who does and does not stay in school. Although more research is needed to identify which specific dropout-prevention strategies and interventions make a positive difference, programs that address individual student needs and that work in tandem with schoolwide interventions to meet grade-level needs hold promise as an effective combination for combating the nation's dropout problem. In addition, a few studies show that school districts with explicit middle-school-to-high-school transition programs have seen a lower dropout rate than districts without such programs (Morgan & Hertzog, 2001; Reents, 2002; Smith, 1997).

Some common characteristics of successful transition programs are

- Collaboration between eighth- and ninth-grade buildings/personnel (Mizelle, 1999)
- Opportunities for students to reflect on—and to experience—the complexities and nuances of the distinctive features of high school (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000)
- Integration of a rigorous and coherent core of courses that are challenging for students and create a culture of high expectations (Cooney & Bottoms, 2002)
- A supportive climate and a sense of community to address issues of disconnection and isolation by providing students and families with information (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000)

Perhaps the most important element of successful dropout-prevention efforts is the identification of students at highest risk for dropping out, who can then be targeted with the appropriate resources to keep them in school. An early warning system that uses indicators based on readily accessible data can predict, during students' first year in high school, whether the students are on the right path toward graduation (Heppen & Bowles Therriault, 2008).

Successful early warning systems identify, track, and analyze basic data that show signs that students are in danger of dropping out. Some research-based recommendations for an early warning system include the following:

- Track ninth-grade students' attendance, and pay particular attention to those who miss 10 days or more of school in the first 30 days (Allensworth & Easton, 2007; Neild & Balfanz, 2006).

- Monitor first-quarter freshman grades, paying particular attention to failures in core academic subjects, so that schools can offer immediate academic supports (Allensworth & Easton, 2005).
- Monitor end-of-year grades, which provide further information about failure rates and reveal grade point averages. In general, grades tend to be a more accurate predictor of dropout than test scores (Allensworth & Easton, 2007).
- Track students who have failed too many core subjects or missed too many days of school to be promoted to tenth grade. This provides perhaps the most critical information about which students should receive special attention and support (Alexander, Entwistle, & Horsey, 1997; Fernandez & Velez, 1989).

Schools interested in using data for optimal impact need an electronic data system that includes individual student-level data that can track students over time and also allow risk factors to be assessed (Jerald, 2006). In addition, regularly updated data must be shared frequently with dropout-prevention team members, including teachers, who have been trained in the use of those data.

After students at risk for retention or dropout are identified, it is critical to match students appropriately with targeted interventions to address the challenges associated with the transition to high school and to promote academic recovery by failing students (Finkelstein & Fong, 2008; Kennelly & Monrad, 2007; Roderick & Camburn, 1999). School supports are also important in helping students at risk for retention. Promising programs have included the following types of social support: providing an orientation to facilities, providing students and families with information, promoting parental involvement, creating a supportive environment and ensuring knowledge of safety and disciplinary policies, and providing mentoring to middle school students by secondary school students (Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001; MacIver, 1990; Mizelle, 1999; Zeedyk et al., 2003). Although research on the effectiveness of such programs is sparse and more longitudinal studies are needed, Dedmond, Brown, and LaFauci (2006) suggest that programs focus on specific interventions that relate directly to the issues adolescents have in self-identity, motivation, and competence.

The TNGTI Grant Program

The TNGTI grant program incorporates several of the characteristics of successful ninth-grade transition and intervention programs. The purpose of the program, as noted in the program guidelines, “is to support eligible campuses in the development and implementation of effective, research-based summer transition and intervention programs aimed at increasing the successful transition of middle school students to the high school environment” (Texas Education Agency, 2009a, p. 3). The program targets ninth graders at risk for dropping out of school.

Program goals are as follows:

- Increasing the number of ninth-grade students promoted to the tenth grade on time
- Increasing coordination between high schools and middle schools in planning for successful high school transitions and the alignment of efforts to reduce ninth-grade failure or dropout

- Increasing student readiness during the summer for participation in high school coursework in mathematics, science, and English language arts
- Increasing student and parent awareness of rigorous high school standards, available programs and activities, and high school structures, policies, and procedures
- Increasing parent involvement in planning for the transition to high school
- Increasing student planning and preparation for postsecondary study and career opportunities
- Reducing or removing learning, school, or social barriers that may decrease chances of student academic success
- Increasing student attachment to, and engagement with, the high school environment, staff, and fellow students in order to reduce student alienation, withdrawal, and dropping out
- Reducing the number of ninth-grade students dropping out of school or being retained by monitoring their progress with a ninth-grade early warning data system
- Providing effective fall and spring interventions to ninth-grade students to reduce the number of students who drop out of school or are retained (Texas Education Agency, 2009a, pp. 3–4)

Eligibility

School districts and open-enrollment charter schools were eligible to apply for a 2009–10 program grant if they met all the following criteria: (1) served 75% or more economically disadvantaged students in each of the 2006, 2007, and 2008 school years; (2) had a population of at least 25 eighth graders in 2007–08; and (3) had a ninth-grade retention rate for 2007–08 that placed them in the highest three school districts or open-enrollment charter schools within a comparable size category. A total of 27 districts or open-enrollment charter schools met these criteria and were eligible for grants ranging from \$37,472 to \$425,000 depending on district or charter school size.

Districts are responsible for deciding which schools participate in the program and how funding is allocated across campuses; however, campuses selected for participation must have served at least 50% at-risk students in the 2007–08 school year (Texas Education Code §29.081(d), 2007). Campus programs are required to serve a minimum number of students, ranging from 10 to 100 students per campus depending on the size of the district or charter school.

Program Components

All grantees are required to implement the following program components: a summer transition program, an early warning data system to identify student program participants at risk of retention or dropout, and fall and spring interventions for students identified through the early warning data system. Requirements for each of these components are described in what follows.

Summer Transition Programs. Schools funded through the TNGTI grant program are required to develop a summer transition program for entering ninth graders who have been identified as at risk for dropping out of school. Grantees can use any of the following indicators specified in the Texas Education Code

(TEC) §29.081(d) to identify at-risk students: low attendance in middle school; course failures, particularly in core subject areas; failing scores on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS); behavior or disciplinary problems; or other risk factors identified by local program staff.

According to the program guidelines, summer transition programs are required to²

- Meet for at least 10 consecutive business days
- Include a minimum of two hours of program time per day
- Include research-based components and strategies that have been identified as effective in the creation of a summer transition program
- Offer activities that are designed to
 - Reinforce or accelerate core academic knowledge and skills
 - Develop academic and social strategies to increase resilience and persistence at the high school level
 - Provide information and training for both students and parents on the transition to high school and planning for success in high school and beyond

Program guidelines also specify that summer transition programs must be developed by a collaborative team of high school and middle school staff that includes, but is not limited to, teachers, administrators, and counselors.

Ninth-Grade Early Warning Data Systems. Districts or open-enrollment charter schools funded by the TNGTI grant program are required to monitor student participants' progress during the ninth-grade year using a system of early warning indicators. Students who are identified as being at risk for retention or dropout based on these indicators are to receive intervention services.

Grantees are responsible for selecting a minimum of three indicators and defining a minimum of two measures for each indicator. Possible indicators and measures in the program guidelines are as follows:

- Attendance
 - Absent two days or more during the first 20 days of high school
 - Absent more than 20% of the days enrolled in high school during the fall semester

² In July 2009, an amendment was introduced by TEA to allow for flexibility in some of the program requirements. If a campus can document a good-faith attempt to recruit the minimum number of students for its summer transition program but is unable to serve that number, the grantee may offer transition activities in the fall for those targeted students who were unable to attend the summer transition program. If the campus is unable to meet the minimum time requirement of ten days during the summer transition program for the targeted students, planned supplemental activities are required during the first week of school for these students.

- Behavior
 - Student exhibits poor classroom conduct in two or more classes.
 - Student receives two or more referrals to the school disciplinarian in a single month.
 - Student receives one or more suspensions.
- Course failure and grades
 - Student fails three or more tests in core subject areas.
 - Student fails to receive course credit in one or more courses.

TEA has provided grantees with access to the Early Warning System Tool developed by the National High School Center (NHSC) and modified by the Texas Comprehensive Center (TXCC) at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL).³ The indicators currently used in the Early Warning System Tool include attendance, academic performance based on grade point average, and frequency of behavioral referrals.⁴ Grantees can use this tool as their ninth grade early warning data system or use it as a guide in developing their own data system. The most recent version of the Early Warning System Tool software can be downloaded from the TXCC website at <http://txcc.sedl.org/orc/ews>.

Staff from TEA, NHSC, and TXCC conducted three regional training sessions in the summer to train staff from grantee districts on how to access the tool, input and manipulate data, and develop effective intervention strategies. Two follow-up webinars have been conducted to provide ongoing technical assistance. TXCC staff also have developed an online teaching assistant tool that includes video tutorials and frequently asked questions. TXCC staff are available by telephone and e-mail to provide additional support for districts and campuses using the Early Warning System Tool. More information about training and webinars is available at <http://txcc.sedl.org/resources/ewst>.

Fall and Spring Interventions. Fall and spring intervention services must be provided to program participants who are identified as being at risk for retention or dropout. Grantees are required to identify a minimum of three interventions to be used for each indicator and establish methods for delivering intervention services and determining whether these services are achieving the desired outcomes.

³ The original template is available at: http://www.betterhighschools.org/pubs/documents/EWStool_001.xls.

⁴ The NHSC developed an Early Warning System Tool prototype in Microsoft Excel based on extensive research on early indicators and risk factors that contribute to students dropping out of school. This research found that at-risk students could be identified early in ninth grade based on attendance, credit accrual in the core subject areas, and overall GPA. From this data, an "on-track/off-track" indicator can be used to flag students considered to be at risk for dropping out. Once a student has been flagged, districts and campuses work to identify and target specific interventions to help the student to get back on track. The TXCC modified this original program into a FileMaker Pro system that is tailored for Texas schools and includes behavior referral indicators, modifiable reporting, and other requested features.

Program Resources

The TNGTI program provided participating districts and schools with several online resources to assist them in planning and implementing their ninth-grade transition and intervention programs. A list of these resources follows:

- The TNGTI program guidelines provide a detailed program description and information on program requirements. The guidelines are available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/disc/calendar/421-09/Guidelines.pdf>
- The TNGTI program blueprint is part of the program guidelines and provides a list of requirements for each program component and suggested milestones and evidence for assessing the progress of planning and implementation. The blueprint is available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/disc/calendar/421-09/Blueprint.pdf>
- A list of possible transition activities, developed by the Texas Comprehensive Center, provides a resource for program planning. The list is available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/disc/calendar/421-09/Activities.pdf>
- A list of additional resources summarizes research on high school dropout, early warning data systems, and exemplary dropout prevention programs. The list is available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/disc/calendar/421-09/Resources.pdf>

The requirements, milestones, and evidence presented in the TNGTI program blueprint served as the foundation for instrument development, data collection, and analysis planning. The TNGTI program guidelines also provided a framework for the evaluation plan. Information related to critical success factors identified by TEA program staff was also incorporated into the evaluation process when appropriate. TEA is in the process of developing a critical success measure document that may be used in future program evaluations to monitor the progress of grantees.

Overview of Participating Campuses

Across all campuses for which 2008–09 data were available, school enrollment ranged from 133 students to 3,125 students, with an average of 1,386 students; 27% of participating campuses had student enrollments over 2,000. The economically disadvantaged population at grantee campuses ranged from 54% to 100%, with an average of 80%. Most participating schools had TAKS passing rates that were substantially higher in reading than in mathematics, with an average passing rate of 78% in reading and 50% in mathematics across all grantee campuses. While the majority of grantee campuses had reading TAKS scores greater than 73% passing ($n = 48$), less than half the grantee campuses had mathematics TAKS scores greater than 50% passing ($n = 30$). Across all 23 participating districts, grant amounts per campus ranged from \$10,683 to \$100,000 and were targeted to serve between 10 and 420 students.

Overview of Participating Districts

Of the 27 districts or open-enrollment charter schools that were eligible to apply for 2009–10 TNGTI program grants, 24 applied for and were awarded grants. One district withdrew from the program after grants were awarded; two schools from other districts also withdrew from the program. A total of 63 campuses from 23 districts were participating in the TNGTI grant program in 2009–10. Eight of these districts (35%) have more than one campus participating, while the remaining 15 districts have only one campus participating (most single-campus participants have only one high school in their district). Of the 23 participating districts, four (17%) are charter schools, and the remainder (83%) are independent school districts. Houston Independent School District accounts for 36% of the grantee population, with 23 participating campuses.

Table 1 lists the district grantees that have more than one campus participating in the program. Table 2 lists districts or charter schools that have only one campus participating in the program. The number of schools participating, the number of students to be served as reported in grant applications, and the total budget per grantee listed on the Notice of Grant Awards (NOGAs) are also presented in the tables.

Table 1. 2009–10 TNGTI Participants (Multiple Campuses)

Districts	Number of Campuses	Number of Students to Be Served	Total Budget
Houston ISD	23	2,300	\$425,000
Dallas ISD	5	1,170	\$425,000
Aldine ISD	5	575	\$425,000
Brownsville ISD	5	600	\$250,000
Edinburg ISD	3	300	\$250,000
Pharr San Juan Alamo ISD	3	300	\$250,000
Mission ISD	2	200	\$200,000
Weslaco ISD	2	288	\$200,000

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition Program Grant Applications and NOGAs (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Table 2. 2009–10 TNGTI Participants (Single Campuses)

Districts	Number of Students to Be Served	Total Budget
Carrizo Springs ISD	150	\$65,000
Rio Grande City ISD	100	\$100,000
Robstown ISD	100	\$75,000
Del Valle ISD	75	\$100,000
Valley View ISD	75	\$75,000
Natalia ISD	67	\$50,000
La Vega ISD	50	\$65,000
Brooks County ISD	50	\$50,000
Faith Family Kids Inc.	50	\$50,000
Bloomington ISD	50	\$42,500
Association for the Development of Academic Excellence	50	\$42,500
Tejano Center for Community Concerns	30	\$42,500
Democratic Schools Research Inc.	20	\$35,742
Chilton ISD	20	\$35,742
Fort Hancock ISD	10	\$35,742

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition Program Grant Applications and NOGAs (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Evaluation of the TNGTI Grant Program

TEA contracted with Learning Point Associates and its partner, Gibson Consulting Group Inc., to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the initial year of the TNGTI grant program. The evaluation began in June 2009 and is expected to continue through January 2011. The objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

1. Describe and evaluate the implementation of program strategies.
2. Evaluate the impact of the program on student outcomes.
3. Evaluate the impact of the program on teacher and staff effectiveness.
4. Determine the cost effectiveness and sustainability of the program.

Districts and open-enrollment charter schools that are awarded TNGTI grants are required to assist the evaluators in obtaining the data needed to achieve these objectives. Data-collection and analysis efforts consist of the following:

- Site visits to a sample of participating campuses that involve interviewing school and district program staff and conducting observations of program activities (summer 2009 and spring 2010)
- Campus-level progress report forms that request information on planning and implementation of program components and activities (September 2009, January 2010, April 2010)
- Student-level data-collections prompt for student information, such as participation hours, attendance counts, behavioral issues, and intervention activities received (September 2009, January 2010, April 2010)
- Surveys of school staff involved with the program (March 2010)
- Expenditure reporting requests that inquire about specific expenditure information in relation to the TNGTI program (May 2010)

The main focus of the interim report is on describing and evaluating implementation of the summer transition program and planning for the early warning data system and intervention services (evaluation objective 1). Descriptive information is also provided on the perceived impact of the program on students (evaluation objective 2) and on teachers and staff (evaluation objective 3). The interim evaluation relies on a range of quantitative, qualitative, and extant data triangulated to create a full picture of the planning and implementation of programs, the extent to which school staff are engaged in the program as intended, and whether staff perceive the program to be effective.

TEA Critical Success Factors

For the TNGTI grant program, TEA program staff created eight critical success factors that one would expect to see at campuses with a high level of program implementation. Typical success factors would include information related to the program components, staff collaboration, and parent involvement. The TNGTI critical success factors helped to guide this evaluation and the questions asked of participating campuses, but they were not used to determine overall program effectiveness.

The following are the eight critical success factors identified by TEA for the TNGTI grant program:⁵

1. Implementation of an eighth to ninth grader summer transition program to address student academic deficiencies and prepare students for high school
2. Implementation of an early warning data system to monitor students for signs of falling behind in the ninth-grade year
3. Provision of intervention services for students who show signs of falling behind as shown by the early warning data system
4. Collaboration between middle school and high school staff in planning and implementing a summer transition program
5. Collaboration between middle school and high school staff in the recruitment of students attending the summer transition program
6. Providing an orientation for parents of entering ninth-grade students on high school policies and procedures
7. Providing opportunities for parents to get involved in students' learning
8. Administrator advocacy and support of parent involvement

Data for future analyses will be drawn from additional campus-level progress reports, student-level data collections, interviews at a sample of TNGTI program sites, and a survey of school staff who have helped to plan or implement the TNGTI program or who have taught students who are participating in the program. Findings from these analyses will be presented in the final evaluation report to TEA in September 2010.

⁵ The TNGTI program critical success factors are part of an internal TEA document that has not been shared with current participating campuses; therefore the grantees are not held directly accountable for demonstrating them during the 2009–10 school year.

Data and Methods

The preliminary findings on program implementation and perceived impact presented in this report are based on the following sources of data: (1) an initial campus progress report completed by campus grant administrators in September 2009, (2) an initial student-level data collection completed by district and campus grant coordinators in September 2009, (3) interviews with campus and district program staff at selected sites conducted in August and September 2009, and (4) observations of summer transition activities at several of these sites conducted in August 2009.

Administrative data on characteristics of students who registered for and participated in campus summer transition programs were obtained from TEA. Additional data on district and campus programs were obtained from TNGTI grant applications. Data sources and analyses methods used in preparing this report are described in the following discussion.

First Campus Progress Report

Each campus that is participating in the TNGTI program is required to complete three campus progress reports on program implementation. The forms were developed by the evaluation team in consultation with TEA evaluation and program staff. The structure and focus of these progress report questions were based on the TNGTI program blueprint components, with specific references to the requirements and milestones that campuses were expected to meet during the year. Guidance for development of the campus progress report form also was provided by the TNGTI critical success factors developed by TEA program staff.

The first campus progress report form was disseminated electronically to participating campuses in September 2009 and focused primarily on the planning and implementation of summer transition activities for entering ninth graders who were invited to participate. There was a 98% completion rate for this data-collection activity, with 62 out of 63 campuses submitting the first campus progress report.

In addition to the summer transition activities, campuses were asked to report on the preliminary planning and implementation of the school's early warning data system and related intervention services for participating students. On the campus progress report, campuses could provide written feedback on barriers and facilitators to overall program implementation and provide suggestions for modifying the program. A complete list of questions addressed in the initial campus progress report is in Appendix A.

First Student Data Collection

Grantees also are required to provide data on students participating in the program through student data collections. Participation rates were examined to look at the number of students identified for the program and those who actually attended activities. The summer activities in the first student-level data collection were chosen from a review of TNGTI grant applications, which included a schedule of planned activities for the summer transition program.

Three such data collections were scheduled to occur between fall 2009 and spring 2010. The first student data collection was completed in September 2009 by participating districts and campuses.⁶ The data collection had a 97% completion rate from 61 campuses, including one campus that later withdrew from the program. The full instructions for completing the first student data collection and a complete list of student-level variables are in Appendix B.

Interviews and Observations

Site visits were conducted in August and September 2009 at eight schools participating in the TNGTI program. These sites were selected to reflect differences in size, program focus, student population, and location.⁷ A purposive sample was chosen to provide a mixture of small, rural high schools as well as large, urban high schools in the program. Site visits were scheduled to coincide with summer transition program activities, when possible. Because some campuses held their programs in June 2009, it was possible to conduct observations of summer activities at only four of the eight campuses.

Interviews

Semistructured interviews were conducted with district administrators, grant coordinators, middle school staff, and high school staff who were involved in planning and implementing the TNGTI program at the selected campuses. The primary purpose of the summer interviews with program staff was to inform the development of the first campus program report form. Many of the program descriptions and summer activities on the first campus progress report form came directly from comments made by program staff during interviews.

The second purpose of the interview protocols was to obtain qualitative information related to any milestones the grantee campuses had achieved, as outlined in the TNGTI program blueprint. Questions related to the critical success factors also were included to obtain feedback from grantees on any challenges they faced to successful program implementation. The open-ended nature of the interview questions allowed respondents to go into detail and provide examples of activities and processes as evidence of successful program implementation. Quotes and experiences of program staff are provided throughout this interim report to illustrate the quantitative findings from other data sources.

Because of the scheduling of the site visits, questions primarily focused on planning and implementing the summer transition program. Questions about the early warning data system and intervention services were not directly asked because these components of the program had not yet been implemented when most of the site visits were conducted. A complete list of campus interview questions is in Appendix C, and the district interview questions are in Appendix D.

⁶ Student participation data were collected by TEA. The data were provided to the evaluation team for analysis without identifying information, to ensure student confidentiality.

⁷ Nine sites were originally identified, but several were replaced as a result of scheduling issues, resulting in eight final sites.

Eighty-four interviews were conducted across the eight sites. Each interview was approximately 45 minutes in length. Table 3 presents a summary of the interviews conducted with district staff, as well as administrators, teachers, and other program staff from both the middle school and high school level.

Table 3. Number of Staff Interviews Conducted During Summer Site Visits

Position of Person Interviewed	Middle School	High School	Total
District staff	—	—	10
Administrator	6	10	16
Teacher	3	41	44
Other staff (e.g., counselor, interventionist)	5	9	14
Total	14	60	84

Source: Interview data collected for the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program evaluation (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Observations. The primary purpose of the observations was to gather firsthand descriptive information on activities offered during the summer transition programs. Observations of summer transition activities were conducted at four sites that had program activities in August. The remaining sites had scheduled their programs earlier in the summer. When possible, a range of activities was observed; typically observations were 10 to 15 minutes in length.

A simple observation protocol was developed by the evaluation team to look at four categories of activities: the reinforcement of core academic knowledge or skills, support of academic and social strategies to support resilience and persistence, transition activities to promote success in high school and beyond, and any parent outreach activities. Descriptive information also was collected about observed student engagement, student behavior, and the instructional organization and flow of activities. A list of activities that might be observed was provided as a guide to site visitors during their observations. The list was based primarily on the transition activities information developed by the Texas Comprehensive Center for TEA.⁸ The observation protocol and guidelines are in Appendix E.

Administrative Data

Additional background data on districts and campuses participating in the program were obtained from TNGTI grant applications. Data on characteristics of campuses (e.g., percentage of economically disadvantaged, percentage of student in various racial or ethnic categories) and characteristics of students participating in the program were obtained from TEA (e.g., eighth-grade TAKS scores in all subjects, absences and disciplinary incidents in 2008–09).

⁸ The transition activities document is available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/opge/disc/calendar/421-09/Activities.pdf>.

Preliminary Findings

Preliminary findings on the implementation of the TNGTI program are organized according to the following topics: Overall program planning, student identification and recruitment, implementation of the summer transition program, summer transition program activities, parent involvement in program activities, and perceived impact of the summer transition program on students and teachers. Information also is included about the initial planning and implementation of an early warning data system and intervention services, barriers and facilitators to program implementation, and program sustainability and suggested modifications to the program.

Program Planning

Campus and district staff shared details on planning for the TNGTI program in both the first campus progress report and interviews. Additional information was collected from the TNGTI grant applications submitted by participating districts and campuses. The first campus progress report included several items related to program planning, such as the number of staff members participating in program planning, the number of meetings held, and the types of collaborative activities that occurred between middle schools and high schools. In interviews, respondents shared information on the types of staff members involved in program planning, the level of collaboration between the middle schools and high schools, and whether any coordination occurred between multiple high school campuses within a district.

Program Goals

Participating campuses were required to develop goals related to the program's three major focus areas, as described in the TNGTI program blueprint: (1) the reinforcement and acceleration of core academic knowledge and skills, (2) the development of academic and social strategies to increase resilience and persistence at the high school level, and (3) the provision of information and training to students and parents on the transition to high school and planning for success in high school and beyond.

The number and types of goals provided in TNGTI grant applications varied widely across campus programs. It was difficult to code the program goals and provide percentages of responses because campuses described their goals in various ways. Several grant applications simply restated all the goals listed in the TNGTI program guidelines. Other applications provided detailed background research on the efficacy of these kinds of programs as a foundation for their campus goals.

The majority of grantees listed academic preparation in core subject areas as the primary goal of their ninth-grade transition programs. Other specific goals included providing opportunities for students to earn high school credit for completing the summer transition program and credit-recovery opportunities for students who failed to pass an eighth-grade course. The program goals most frequently mentioned on the TNGTI grant applications are as follows:

- Academic preparation in core subject areas
- Opportunity to earn ninth-grade credits or eighth-grade credit recovery
- Familiarizing students with high school policies, procedures, structures, and settings
- Making parents and students aware of high school requirements and expectations
- Encouraging college and career exploration
- Increasing student planning and preparation for postsecondary study and career opportunities
- Increasing student attachment to and engagement in school
- Providing social supports for students
- Strengthening communication and coordination between high schools and middle schools
- Strengthening school and community relationships (e.g., through community service projects, field trips, or school–community partnerships)

In interviews with program staff, respondents were asked to describe the goals and purpose of their summer transition programs. Most indicated that the main purpose of the summer program was to help students transition from eighth grade to ninth grade and understand the high school structure and system. A high school administrator offered this analogy: “This program and the way we implemented it was to truly give the kids a good foundation of what is coming up. It is almost like a preview; you go to the movies and you see all the other previews....This is what is coming up.” Other interview respondents said that providing information about rules, schedules, and a tour of the building often gave incoming students a better understanding of the differences between the middle school and the high school structure. One middle school administrator explained, “They get to know their scheduling, they get to know the building. By the time they start high school, they already know the building inside and out.... They know how everything works. That makes it easier.”

Other goals mentioned by interview respondents included improving academic skills and providing a welcoming and supportive environment for students. Respondents indicated that the summer transition program provided students with basic academic skills in core classes. For example, one high school administrator said a goal of the program was for students to “learn some basic skills around things like using the graphic calculator. For a lot of them, that is going to be something that is new.” In addition, a major focus of the summer transition program activities was to reduce stress and anxiety and increase excitement about coming to high school. According to one high school teacher, “If we look at the students’ faces now when they come into the building, it is not nervousness anymore compared to the first day....They are excited to start school already.” Additional goals mentioned in campus-level interviews included laying the foundation for dropout prevention, introducing students to high school teachers and staff, and providing an opportunity for incoming students to socialize and make friends.

Collaboration Between Middle Schools and High Schools

One of the goals of the TNGTI program is to foster collaboration between the middle school and high schools on planning for student success. Middle school and high school collaboration in planning and implementing the summer transition program was identified as a critical success factor by TEA program staff and is listed as a requirement on the TNGTI blueprint.

Meetings between middle school and high school personnel. Campus progress report data indicate that most TNGTI programs were collaboratively planned by high school and middle school staff, although the amount of time spent together varied. At most campuses, high school and middle school staff members held meetings to plan the TNGTI program, most often coming together for one to two meetings (42%) or three to four meetings (34%). Only about 8% of campuses did not hold any planning meetings between high school and middle school staff. Table 4 shows the percentages of campuses by the number of planning meetings reported.

Table 4. Number and Percentage of Planning Meetings Held Between High School and Middle School Staff Members for the TNGTI Program (N = 62)

Number of Planning Meetings	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
None	5	8.1%
One to two	26	41.9%
Three to four	21	33.9%
Five or more	10	16.1%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

During the summer site visit interviews, one district staff member discussed the value of having this relationship between two school levels working on the program: “It is innovative to think in terms of being able to have two different types of campuses work together and collaborate to help students be successful as they leave their [middle school] campus and move on to the high school.”

High school and middle school staff members. A variety of staff members at both the high school and middle school levels participated in planning and implementing the TNGTI program. Most campus progress reports indicated that planning and implementation was undertaken by several high school staff members, including the principal, core subject teachers, grant coordinators, counselors, and assistant principals. On average, 10 high school staff participated in program planning at each campus. The number of high school staff involved in planning at each campus ranged from 2 to 27.⁹

⁹ One high school campus indicated that 0 high school staff were involved in program planning. This campus did not hold a summer transition program but indicated that transition activities were offered during the school year.

Staff at the middle school level also participated in some planning, most often the principal, counselors, and core subject teachers. On average, six middle school staff participated in program planning at each campus. The number of middle school staff involved at each campus ranged from 0 to 24. In addition, six out of 62 campuses (10%) listed no middle school staff involvement in planning and 10 (16%) listed only one or two middle school staff members. Table 5 shows the types of middle school and high school staff members involved in program planning, the number of campuses where those staff were involved, and the mean number of staff members involved at each campus.

Table 5. Staff Members Involved in Program Planning Activities Across All Campuses (N = 62)

Staff Members Involved in Program Planning	High School		Middle School	
	Number of Campuses	Mean Number of Staff per Campus	Number of Campuses	Mean Number of Staff per Campus
Principal	58	1.0	40	1.7
Core subject teachers	54	4.2	32	3.5
Grant coordinators	48	1.1	5	1.0
Counselors	45	1.4	40	2.0
Assistant principal	44	1.5	28	1.6
Elective teachers	35	2.1	8	1.0
Interventionists	27	1.0	9	1.6
Other	22	1.6	7	1.4
None	1	0.0	6	0.0
Total	61	9.71	56	5.5

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

High school and middle school collaboration activities. Most campuses reported that when high school and middle school staff met, they would most frequently discuss strategies for recruiting and enrolling students in the program (77%) and determining program participants (69%). During summer site visits, campus staff confirmed that when middle schools were involved in the planning process, their primary purpose was to help identify and recruit students for the summer program.

A number of campuses also reported that high school and middle school staff members collaborated on other aspects of program planning beyond student identification. On the first campus progress report, just under half the campuses (45%) reported collaborating on the goals and timelines for the program. Table 6 shows the number and percentages of campuses that reported specific collaboration activities between middle school and high school staff.

Table 6. Middle School and High School Collaborative Planning Activities (N = 62)

Collaborative Activities	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Discussed strategies for recruiting and enrolling students in the summer program	48	77.4%
Discussed strategies for determining program participants	43	69.4%
Conducted in-person planning meetings	41	66.1%
Exchanged e-mails about planning the program	41	66.1%
Worked collaboratively on the goals and timelines for the program	28	45.2%
Collaborated on writing the grant proposal	13	21.0%
Conducted conference calls to plan the program	12	19.4%
High school and middle school personnel did not work together to plan the TNGTI program	5	8.1%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to "Check all that apply." Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

During summer site visits, respondents at three of the eight visited sites reported that middle school staff had been involved in various aspects of program planning. One district staff member noted

I tried to meet with all of the [middle schools and high schools] at the same time.... They are the ones that know their kids best. I wanted to involve all of them. As we were coming up with the different drafts, I would present it to all of the secondary principals. They all, as a group, decided. Ultimately, it was the high school principals, but the junior highs had a lot of say-so about what should be in the curriculum.

Planning by Multiple Campuses Within a District

Several of the districts chosen for summer site visits had multiple campuses participating in the TNGTI program. At these sites, program staff were asked whether the high school campuses within those districts collaborated in planning their TNGTI programs. Almost all the interview respondents reported that planning and decision making occurred at the individual campus level. In some cases, high school principals shared program ideas but they did not try to implement the same schedule of activities. Respondents specifically mentioned that campuses chose which subject areas to emphasize (e.g., mathematics and science) on the basis of the needs of their student populations.

At one site, the district encouraged campuses to offer similar programs but allowed for flexibility in tailoring activities to meet the needs of specific groups of students. As one high school staff member explained,

The program is implemented differently on every campus, as far as I know. All the campuses based [their programs] on the needs of the students. The district gave us basically an overview and then they let us gear the program toward the needs of our students that were coming in.

Student Identification and Recruitment

In the first campus progress report, campuses were asked to indicate how students were identified for participation in the TNGTI program and what strategies were used to recruit students. Interviews with program staff included similar questions about identification and recruitment. Data on the number of students who were identified for the summer transition program and the number who actually attended were obtained through the first student data collection. Administrative student data for these students, including their prior disciplinary actions and eighth-grade TAKS scores, were obtained from TEA.

Identification Strategies

Two primary strategies were used by campuses to identify students for the summer transition program.¹⁰ Campuses targeted individuals who they thought could benefit from the program on the basis of identified needs, and some also openly advertised the summer transition program to encourage other students and parents to participate. Assistance in identifying students was provided by middle school personnel (counselors, administrators, teachers). Collaboration between middle school and high school staff in the recruitment of students is a specific goal of the TNGTI program and was identified as a critical success factor by TEA program staff.

On the campus progress report, each campus was asked to indicate which strategies they had used to identify potential student participants for the TNGTI program. Table 7 shows that campuses used a variety of targeted and open program enrollment strategies, which are described in further detail below. Respondents also reported collaborating with middle school staff specifically to identify students, including counselors (68%), principals and assistant principals (63%), and teachers (45%).

¹⁰ Criteria for student eligibility are provided in the TNGTI program guidelines: “Students identified and selected for participation in the TNGTI program shall be students identified as being at risk of dropping out of school using any of the following factors: at-risk criteria outlined by TEC §29.081(d), low attendance in middle school, course failures (especially in core academic subjects), failing TAKS scores, behavior and disciplinary indicators, or other risk factors as identified by local program staff” (Texas Education Agency, 2009a, p. 2).

Table 7. Strategies Used to Identify TNGTI Program Participants (N = 62)

Strategies	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Analysis of student data (e.g., achievement, attendance)	52	83.9%
Collaboration with middle school counselors	42	67.7%
Program was advertised, preenrollment of interested students	40	64.5%
Collaboration with middle school principal/assistant principal	39	62.9%
Parents signup of students	35	56.5%
Collaboration with middle school teachers	28	45.2%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Targeting At-Risk Students. As Table 7 shows, analysis of student data was the most commonly cited strategy for identifying students. 52 out of 62 campuses (84%) reported that they used student data in their decision making (including achievement, demographic, attendance, and behavioral data). Of those campuses that reported analyzing data, the most common source was the eighth-grade TAKS results (85%), with students who either did not pass or had a low score. Course grades in core subjects were also used by 69% of those campuses. The types of data sources used to identify students are presented in Table 8, as well as the number and percentage of campuses that reported using those data sources.

Table 8. Data Sources Used to Identify Students for the TNGTI Summer Program (N = 52)

Data Source Used to Identify Students	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Eighth-grade TAKS test results	44	84.6%
Eighth-grade core course grades	36	69.2%
At risk to not graduate from high school in four years	36	69.2%
Excessive number of unexcused absences in eighth grade	26	50.0%
Behavioral/disciplinary issues in eighth grade	25	48.1%
Demographic data not related to school performance (e.g., free/reduced-price lunch status, retained in grade in prior year)	18	34.6%
Eighth-grade benchmark test results	15	28.8%
Excessive number of tardies in eighth grade	11	21.2%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

In interviews with program staff, eighth-grade TAKS scores were cited as the most frequently used indicator by campuses to identify potential program participants. Respondents indicated that school sites used this student information differently. Four schools focused on students who had failed any part of the TAKS test, while three schools with mathematics and science programs focused specifically on poor mathematics TAKS scores. At one site visit school, a different remediation program specifically for students who failed the eighth-grade TAKS was held at the middle school, and the summer transition program was held at the high school. To prevent overburdening the students with school activities, this campus decided to select only students who had low but still passing eighth-grade TAKS scores for participation in the ninth-grade summer transition program.

Interview respondents also mentioned other criteria used to identify students at risk of retention or dropout. These criteria included having failed a course in a core academic subject, having repeated a grade in the past, attendance issues, behavior issues, having limited English proficiency, and being eligible to receive a free or reduced-price lunch. Teacher recommendations, parent requests, and student interest were also used in identifying potential participants.

Open Program Enrollment. In addition to targeting specific students to attend the summer transition program, many campuses reported that they advertised the availability of the program broadly to include any interested students. One reason that campuses broadened student eligibility criteria may have been a desire to meet the minimum participation requirements set by TEA in the TNGTI program guidelines.¹¹ Approximately 65% of campuses responding to the first campus progress report indicated that the program was openly advertised and any incoming ninth-grade student could sign up; 57% also reported that parents could sign students up for the program (see Table 7).

This enrollment strategy also was mentioned in interviews with program staff. At five of the eight visited sites, respondents reported that they decided to extend eligibility to all incoming ninth-grade students interested in attending. As one high school counselor put it, “When we started the program, they opened it up to more students. It was not really targeted only for the at-risk students, but was opened up to all the students that wanted to have an opportunity to get ahead or do the transition better.”

Recruitment Strategies

A variety of strategies were used to recruit students to participate in the summer transition program. In interviews, the most frequently mentioned recruitment methods were telephone calls to parents, letters home describing the program, and parent meetings. As one high school administrator noted, “I have personally called the houses of our incoming ninth graders that would qualify, meeting our criteria, to invite them to come. I had one of our upper class mentors come in and he called again.”

Interview respondents also stated that staff members made presentations to the students at the middle schools, distributed pamphlets and posters, and offered prizes and other incentives to recruit

¹¹ Minimum student enrollment for the summer transition program varied by district size, but for larger districts the participation rate was set at 100 students per campus.

participants. One summer transition staff member stressed the importance of incentives: “We are buying supplies for the students, and that is a big help. We are economically disadvantaged 79% in this school. The parents have other children, and to get a big bag of supplies is a good thing. The [students] only get the supplies if they come [to the program].” Another high school teacher commented,

They had an assembly and brought about ten of the [student mentors]. It was about a half hour long and they talked to the kids and motivated them. Some of the teachers came and introduced themselves, and they had posters and fliers and they posted them all over the middle school.

At all but one of the sites visited by the evaluation team, the feeder middle schools were actively involved in recruiting students for the summer transition program. Interview respondents stated that middle school staff helped identify at-risk students, gave student data files to high school staff, distributed recruitment materials and promotional posters, and encouraged participation through presentations and discussion with students. One middle school administrator described his school’s efforts in this way:

Our [middle school] counselors helped the kids in understanding what the program was, the ramifications and what was expected from them and what was needed for them to even show up; that there would be transportation, that they would be fed, that they would get materials they were going to need. [The counselors] basically make them feel comfortable [about] going.

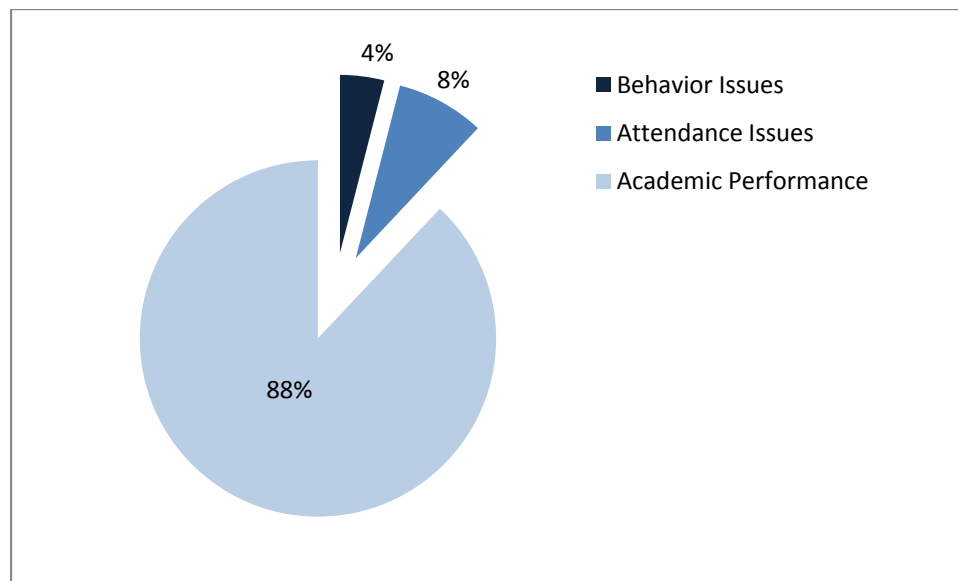
Overview of Identified and Participating Students

For the first student data collection, campuses were asked to provide information on students who were identified for participation in the summer transition program. A total of 4,806 students were identified across the 61 campuses that provided student data for evaluation.¹² Of the students who were identified for participation, 29% did not attend program activities. In addition, no information was provided on program attendance for 4% of these students. The data provided suggest that approximately 67% of students who were identified for participation attended at least one day of the summer transition program.

For the student data collection, campuses were asked to indicate why specific students were identified for participation in the summer transition program from the three main indicators (i.e., for academic, attendance, or behavioral reasons). The data indicated that a majority of students were identified from their past academic performance (88%). The remaining students were identified because of attendance (8%) or behavioral issues (4%). These percentages reflect the findings from the campus progress report related to the types of data sources most often used for student identification. Figure 1 shows the distribution of students across the three reasons for identification for program participation.

¹² Out of 63 participating campuses, two campuses did not submit information for the first student data collection.

Figure 1. Reasons Students Were Identified for Participation in the Summer Program (N = 61)



Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

The majority of students identified for the program met the minimum passing standards on the eighth-grade TAKS assessments in reading (83%) and social studies (81%). Fewer students identified for the program passed the mathematics (64%) and science (52%) eighth-grade TAKS assessments. Table 9 shows the number of students with an available eighth-grade TAKS score for each subject and the percentage of students who met the minimum standards. Information is presented for students identified to recruit for the program, as well as those students who actually participated in summer transition activities.

Table 9. Percentages of TNGTI Students Who Passed Eighth-Grade TAKS Exams

Subject	Identified Students		Participating Students	
	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Reading	4,455	83.4%	3,136	86.0%
Social Studies	4,655	81.3%	3,136	84.0%
Mathematics	4,467	64.4%	3,015	67.5%
Science	4,655	52.4%	3,136	56.1%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009) and 2008–09 extant student data.

Although many students identified for the TNGTI program met the minimum standards on the eighth-grade TAKS assessments, the mean scores of these groups were not significantly above the minimum TAKS scores needed to pass. In the data from the spring 2007 TAKS performance standards, the cut

score for all subject areas was 2100.¹³ The reading and social studies scores are within one standard deviation of the cut scores, and the mathematics and science scores are very close to the cut scores. In the case of the science TAKS mean score for identified students, it is actually below the cut score of 2100. Therefore, students who were able to graduate from eighth grade because they met the minimum TAKS standards were identified to be in the TNGTI program, but these numbers indicate that they still struggled in the areas of mathematics and science. Table 10 shows the mean eighth-grade TAKS score and standard deviation for identified and participating students in each subject according to the available data.

Table 10. Mean Eighth-Grade TAKS Scores for TNGTI Students

Subject	Identified Students			Participating Students		
	Number of Students	Mean TAKS Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Students	Mean TAKS Score	Standard Deviation
Reading	4,455	2242.9	254.8	3,012	2266.1	247.6
Social Studies	4,648	2215.2	252.8	3,132	2238.0	241.2
Mathematics	4,467	2153.1	198.1	3,014	2166.9	194.9
Science	4,648	2090.6	245.2	3,132	2113.6	229.8

Note: Cut scores = 2100 for each subject according to data from the spring 2007 TAKS performance standards
Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009) and 2008–09 extant student data.

These findings indicate that students who participated in the summer program had slightly higher passing rates and mean scores on the eighth-grade TAKS than the total pool of recruited students. However, the percentages and mean scores are quite similar between the two groups. In addition, fewer students met the minimum standards on the mathematics and science assessments than on the reading and social studies assessments, which may reflect the decision of many campuses to focus their summer transition program activities on these subject areas.

Data also were obtained on student disciplinary actions that occurred prior to ninth grade, and the evaluation specifically looked at the number of in-school and out-of-school suspensions.¹⁴ The analysis showed that both students identified for the program and those who participated averaged approximately two in-school suspensions and one out-of-school suspension over the course of their academic careers. These results include students who had zero disciplinary incidents on their student records. (See Table 11.)

¹³ Information on the TAKS scale score standards required to meet the minimum standard is available at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/scoring/pstandards/perfst07.pdf>

¹⁴ Analysis was conducted on all available student discipline data. These data were unavailable for most campuses.

Table 11. Average Number of Suspensions for TNGTI Students Prior to Ninth Grade

Type of Suspensions	Identified Students (N = 1872)	Participating Students (N = 1188)
In-school suspensions	2.4	2.0
Out-of-school suspensions	1.1	1.0

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009) and 1997–2009 extant student data.

In addition to academic and behavioral issues, many TNGTI students faced other challenges. The majority of identified students (89%) and participating students (88%) were considered economically disadvantaged, as was expected from campus eligibility for the TNGTI grant program. Table 12 shows the number and percentages of recruited and participating students who were economically disadvantaged, had limited English proficiency, and were eligible to receive special education services, according to available student data.

Table 12. Percentages of TNGTI Students Identified as Economically Disadvantaged, Limited English Proficient, and Eligible for Special Education Services

Student Classification	Identified Students (N = 4707)		Participating Students (N = 3174)	
	Number of Students	Percentage of Students	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Economically disadvantaged	4,202	89.3%	2,790	88.0%
Limited English proficient	903	19.2%	555	17.5%
Eligible for special education services	601	12.8%	345	10.9%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009) and 2008–09 extant student data.

Student Participation in Summer Transition Activities

Information on the number of students who participated in the program, the number of days they participated, and the types of activities they participated in was obtained through the first student data collection. Data on the number of students whom the programs were intended to serve were obtained through the TNGTI grant applications.

Program Attendance. Of the 61 campuses that provided student participation data, approximately 67% of the students identified for participation in the summer transition program actually participated for at least one day. On average, students who participated in the summer transition program attended approximately nine days of activities. Dividing the number of days each student attended by the number of days offered at each campus, we calculate that students participated in approximately 82% of the programming offered at their campuses. Variation in program attendance is summarized in Table 13.

Table 13. Number of Days TNGTI Students Attended the Summer Program (N = 4,806)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Days attended	1	21	8.7	3.5

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Each campus established targets for student participation in their original TNGTI grant applications. The number of students to be served ranged from 10 to 420 per campus.¹⁵ In most cases, campuses ended up falling short of these targets. Based on data from TNGTI grant applications, a total of 6,280 students were expected to be served by the program. Campuses reported that 4,806 students were identified for participation, and 3,221 students attended at least one day of summer activities. In sum, approximately half the targeted number of students actually participated in the summer transition program (51%).

Table 14 presents a summary of program participation as a percentage of the campus target numbers for student participation as put forth in the initial TNGTI grant applications. For example, if a campus indicated that it planned to serve 100 students, but only 75 students attended, then 75% of targeted students were served. As the table shows, only 17 of the responding campuses served 81% or more of the students that they had planned to serve (28%). There were 21 campuses that served 40% or fewer of the students they had planned to serve (34%). In four cases, campuses indicated that none of the students identified for participation in the summer transition program actually attended (7%).

Table 14. Actual Participation in Summer Transition Programs as a Percentage of Campus Target for Student Participation (N = 61)

Percentage of Target Student Participation	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
81–100%	17	27.9%
61–80%	8	13.1%
41–60%	15	24.6%
21–40%	9	14.8%
1–20%	8	13.1%
No students participated	4	6.6%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Reasons for Nonparticipation. During site visits, the most frequently mentioned reason for identified students not participating in the summer transition program was a conflict with vacations or other family plans that took them away from the school during the summer. At some schools, a high

¹⁵ At some campuses, the expected student participation was above the minimum requirements for the TNGTI grant.

proportion of migrant students returned to their home country for the summer months.¹⁶ As one high school administrator put it, “We’re in a Hispanic area. A lot of kids go out of town to Mexico and they don’t come back until the second week of school.”

Conflicts with other campus programs offered during the summer also were mentioned as a primary reason that many students did not attend the summer transition program. Examples of other programs were summer school and extracurricular activities such as football or cheerleading. Respondents expressed some frustration when conflicts occurred and hoped for better scheduling next summer to avoid program conflicts. One high school teacher expressed frustration with conflicting programs at the high school this way: “I will be very honest, if we had not had the second [program] here, the kids that were here in the morning would have been ours [in the afternoon]. I am a parent. I don’t think if I told my child they are going to stay there from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. that it would be a happy summer for any of us.”

Less frequently mentioned reasons for nonparticipation were students just not wanting to come to school during their summer vacation, outside obligations such as jobs or babysitting, general confusion about the purpose of the program, a lack of response from parents, and transportation issues.

Implementation of the Summer Transition Program

The inclusion of a summer transition program is one of the three major components of the TNGTI program, as specified in the TNGTI program blueprint. Implementation of a summer transition program that addresses student academic deficiencies and prepares entering ninth-grade students for high school also is one of the critical success factors identified by TEA program staff. Both the first campus progress report and interviews with program staff contained questions on program implementation and organization. Questions focused on the length and timing of the program, whether the summer program was offered in conjunction with other programs, how this program was different from previous transition activities, teacher preparation activities and instructional strategies used, and the extent to which summer activities had been implemented as planned.

Program Length and Timing

As required in the TNGTI program guidelines and blueprint, the majority of summer programs were at least two weeks (10 days) in length and a minimum of two hours per day. According to the first campus progress report, 39% of campuses conducted programs exactly 10 days in length, and 50% conducted programs longer than 10 days.¹⁷ Campuses reported that the summer transition programs were most

¹⁶ At the eight campuses at which site visits were conducted, three of the campuses served 80% or more of the students they planned to serve; three served approximately 50% to 60% of the students they planned to served, and one served approximately 30%. One visited campus served 2% of the students it planned to serve, with only four student participants attending summer transition activities.

¹⁷ The student data collection also requested information on program length. Consistent with the campus progress report data, most of the 61 campuses that provided student participation data reported offering 10 or more days of programming (84%), although one of these campuses indicated that students attended only two days of the

commonly held in June (47%) or August (29%). Table 15 shows the length of the summer programs, and Table 16 shows the months in which the programs occurred.

Table 15. Length of Summer Transition Programs in Days (N = 62)

Program Length	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Less than 10 days	5	8.1%
Exactly 10 days	24	38.7%
More than 10 days	31	50.0%
No response	2	3.2%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Table 16. Timing of Summer Transition Programs (N = 62)

Month	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
June	29	46.8%
July	7	11.3%
August	18	29.0%
All summer	5	8.1%
Other	3	4.8%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

During summer site visits, interview respondents gave several reasons for the timing of the summer transition program, including scheduling around the summer TAKS administration and accommodating family vacation time. One middle school administrator noted

[The Summer Transition Program] is offered almost at the end of the summer. I think this is the best time, because if [parents] plan their vacation, they will usually go right away on vacation, and then [students] start coming back about two weeks before school starts, so this is a good time.

program. Notably, four campuses reported that they did not offer summer transition programs; these campuses reported that none of the students identified for program participation actually attended the program. Program length at the five remaining campuses ranged from three to nine days.

Coordination of the Summer Transition Program With Other Programs

Of the 62 campuses that completed the first campus progress report, 30 campuses indicated they offered the summer transition programs in conjunction with other district or campus initiatives (48%). In most cases, the summer transition program was coordinated with an academic remediation program such as summer school. In a few cases, summer transition programs were coordinated with academic enrichment programs, other ninth-grade transition programs, or other related activities. Table 17 shows the number and percentages of campuses that offered summer transition programs in conjunction with other programs.

Table 17. Other Programs Offered in Conjunction With Summer Transition Programs (N = 30)

Other Summer Programs Offered	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Academic remediation (e.g., summer school, credit recovery, tutoring)	18	60.0%
Similar ninth-grade transition programs (e.g., High School Early Start)	4	13.3%
Academic enrichment (e.g., science programs, credit advancement)	3	10.0%
College preparatory	2	6.7%
Social skills	2	6.7%
Other (e.g., sports activities, band practice)	6	20.0%
Not identified	1	3.3%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Interview respondents indicated that many of the students identified for participation in the summer transition program also had to attend summer school, so schedules between the two programs needed to be coordinated. One district staff member noted that the participating campus chose to conduct the programs at the same time by having summer school classes in the morning and transition activities in the afternoon:

My understanding is that [the timing of the summer transition program] related to the summer school schedule and it was incorporated into the summer school so that it would not have to be a separate program.

Previous Summer Transition Programs

Data from the first campus progress report showed 30 campuses that indicated that they had offered some sort of transition activities in prior school years (48%). Although the concept of a transition program was not new, the TNGTI summer transition program activities differed from previous programs. The campuses that had previously offered a middle-school-to-high-school transition program reported that the TNGTI program offered new activities (81%), more activities (77%), identified students in a more

targeted way (54%), offered college visits and other field trips (54%), and was longer in duration (50%). In site visit interviews, one high school counselor explained the benefits of a longer transition program:

[The summer program] is two weeks and it seems there is more emphasis on it. So it gives them a longer period of time for students to actually get oriented. I think in the past it has maybe been just three days.... I can't remember it being any longer than a week at any given time. Then there seems to be a lot more structure, and also the use of the student mentors actually leading the activities, that seems to have been more beneficial.

Table 18 shows the percentage of campuses that reported specific ways in which the TNGTI summer transition program differed from previous transition programs offered at those campuses.

Table 18. Ways in Which TNGTI Summer Transition Program Differed From Previous Programs (N = 30)

Ways in Which Summer Programs Differed	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
New activities were offered	21	80.8%
More activities were offered	20	76.9%
Students were identified for participation in a more targeted way	14	53.8%
Site visits and educational field trips were available (and had not been before)	14	53.8%
The program lasted longer	13	50.0%
Staff professional development was included (and had not been before)	7	26.9%
Transportation was provided for students (and had not been before)	6	23.1%
There was a stronger parental component (that had not been before)	6	23.1%
Nothing was new or different about the summer program	3	11.5%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

The other 32 campuses had never offered a summer transition program for entering ninth-grade students (52%). At four of the visited campuses, program staff mentioned that there had been summer school and a freshman orientation day at their schools, but not a program that focused on the academic, social, and transitional planning needs of the students for an extended period of time. One administrator said in an interview, “This was one of the first times where you had kids that went from middle school to actually physically reporting to a high school during the summer.” Another high school administrator emphasized the importance of small groups:

They are getting information in smaller group settings than we usually do. We have our freshmen orientation and we have a thousand freshmen coming in and we usually divide it into two groups of five hundred and we are all talking to them at the same time.... [With the TNGTI summer program,] I was able to talk to 25 kids at a time.

Teacher Preparation and Instructional Strategies

In site visit interviews, respondents were asked whether any specific training was provided to staff who were involved in implementing the summer transition program. Almost all campuses provided at least one or two days of training before the summer program to review the activities and objectives. One teacher interviewed noted that

On the Friday before [the summer program] started, we had a meeting with all the teachers. At that time we went over [the program activities] and then we broke off by subjects and went more into detail on how we were going to plan things or how we were going to implement them.

Several visited schools held intensive one- or two-week professional development sessions for teachers that focused on integrating major components into their summer transition program, such as training on new computer software. Participating teachers felt this in-depth training was beneficial and had a positive impact on their teaching beyond the summer activities.

Instructional Strategies. A variety of instructional approaches were observed during the summer transition activities. Some teachers used a more traditional lecture approach and others included more group interaction. During interviews, the most frequently mentioned instructional strategies were student groups, hands-on activities using manipulatives, and problem-solving or inquiry-based approaches. An administrator commented favorably on the group interaction that teachers in one of the programs emphasized:

One thing that I do like about the entire [program] is the fact that the activities are very interactive. It is not about a teacher standing in front of a classroom and giving a lecture. It is actually about connecting the learning to something that the students are very familiar with. When learning is connected to everyday life, they tend to remember those things.

Overall, teachers and staff observed during site visits during the summer demonstrated a high level of organization in the summer transition activities. At three sites, teachers used well-structured lessons or activities with objectives either on the board or on worksheets, questions with natural progressions from easier to more difficult, well-paced activities, periodic checks for understanding, and appropriate review of missed materials. Program staff at one campus demonstrated a moderate level of instructional organization. There was a general flow and purpose to activities, but a less clearly defined structure than at other sites. For example, teachers provided oral instead of written instruction, leading to some student confusion. An extended period of down time also was observed at this campus as some

students waited for others to finish a task. This could be a reflection of the fact that some summer transition activities are more informal than those during the school year.

Extent of Program Implementation

Information for the interim report was collected too early in the school year to provide an accurate and complete description of program implementation. During the summer site visits, participating staff were asked whether they were able to implement all the summer transition program activities as planned. At seven out of eight visited schools, interview respondents said they successfully implemented almost all the planned program activities during the summer. Some missed a field trip or two, but the majority of core program activities were implemented as planned. One administrator explained that

I would say the [teachers] were pretty prepared...and I think they executed by and large what they said they were going to do. I am sure there were probably minor tweaks on a day-to-day basis, but to my knowledge they pretty much did what they said they were going to do with the kids.

One school site was unable to implement summer activities because student attendance was poor. As an alternative, the school planned to offer transitional activities during the fall semester.

Summer Transition Program Activities

Detailed information about summer transition program activities was collected using the first campus progress report and interviews with program staff. Questions focused on the types of activities and opportunities offered, which activities were the major focus of the summer program, and which activities students attended most frequently. Observations were conducted at four site visit campuses to get a firsthand experience of program activities. Information on student participation in specific summer transition activities was obtained through the student data collection.

Summer Transition Activities Offered

The first campus progress report asked campuses to indicate which of 15 listed summer transition activities and opportunities were offered to participating students, and which were considered a major focus of their summer transition program.¹⁸ Almost all of participating campuses offered high school orientation activities (92%), academic instruction in core subjects (90%), and training in study skills (89%). Table 19 shows the top five summer transition activities, the number and percentage of campuses who offered them, and the number and percentage of campuses who reported those activities as the major focus of their summer programs.

¹⁸ In the TNGTI grant applications, campuses included a schedule of activities that they planned to offer during their summer transition program. The campus progress report forms included a list that was compiled from the most frequently mentioned activities in the grant applications.

Table 19. Percentages of Campuses That Offered Summer Activities and That Indicated Which Were a Major Focus of the Summer Transition Program (N = 62)

Summer Transition Program Activities	Offered Activities		Major Focus	
	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Orientation activities to familiarize students with high school facilities	57	91.9%	38	61.3%
Academic instruction in core subjects	56	90.3%	47	75.8%
Training in study skills (e.g., note taking, time management)	55	88.7%	37	59.7%
Planning for high school and graduation	53	85.5%	36	58.1%
Peer relationship building (e.g., team building, mentorship with older students)	48	77.4%	32	51.6%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

The first campus progress data show that the activities offered by the fewest campuses were college site visits (44%), opportunities to earn course credits (31%), and community service activities (23%). (See Appendix F, Table F1, for the complete list of summer transition activities and campus responses.)

In interviews, program staff were asked to provide details about the activities that were offered as part of their school’s summer transition program. They were specifically asked to describe the following types of activities: academic activities, opportunities for students to engage in social activities and work in groups, and activities focusing on the transition to high school and planning for the future. Staff members also were asked to describe instructional approaches and to discuss the extent to which program activities were implemented as planned. Additional information on program activities and instructional strategies was obtained through structured observations at four of the eight visited sites.

Academic Activities. Consistent with the first campus progress report data, almost all the summer programs conducted by the eight site visit campuses focused on academic preparation, particularly in mathematics and science. Program staff stated that their campus chose to focus on mathematics and science because of student weaknesses or lack of interest in these subjects. A high school principal explained, “So many times our kids are not confident in math or science, and we are trying to slowly build their confidence levels.” One ninth-grade coordinator at another campus stated that

[Students who are participating in the program] are getting an appreciation for science. We just have to keep that up so they don’t think they hate science. They are starting to soften on science. They are starting to look forward to going to math class, which is crazy. The kids are talking about difficult courses as being “cool.”

Most of the sites visited also included activities that focused on reading and writing, and two included activities that focused on history or geography. These program activities were chosen to address student deficiencies and prepare students for high school courses. As one high school teacher explained,

We have been reading, summarizing, reinforcing literary terms and imagery terms and stuff that they should have learned in middle school and giving them a head start on what to expect the first six weeks so they are exposed to the vocabulary already.

The structure of observed academic activities varied. Some were structured very similarly to a high school class with teacher-led lessons, while others focused on interactive problem solving outside the classroom. The following academic activities were observed at four sites:

- **Science** (3 campuses)—Students built containers for eggs and dropped them to test the principles of physics, inflated balloons with different chemical reactions using laboratory equipment, and discussed diseases and symptoms during a biology lesson.
- **Mathematics** (3 campuses)—Students used algebra tiles to create equations with variables, rotated straws to demonstrate parallel lines and angles, used manipulatives to multiply binomials, and calculated grade point averages from grades and high school credits.
- **English Language Arts** (2 campuses)—Students read passages aloud, illustrated a narrative text, and answered questions posed by the teacher about the readings.
- **Social Studies** (1 campus)—Students used Internet resources to locate images of physical maps.

Social Activities and Academic Strategies. Most sites offered team-building activities and other opportunities to develop positive peer relationships. During interviews, program staff provided examples of social activities that were designed to provide students with a positive experience of high school. Social activities focused on group discussion, leadership, self-esteem, and positive behaviors. One teacher explained the importance of such activities in facilitating students' transition to high school:

We had an opportunity to talk about peer relationships. In high school, that is the top priority for them. So they have had a lot of opportunities to talk about meeting new people. It is going to be frightening the first couple of weeks.... We really focused on building positive relationships. It is so easy to be drawn to things that are not positive.

Several schools also involved student mentors in social activities. For example, program participants at some campuses were given the opportunity to hear advice from older students about the high school experience. One program coordinator described a speech by student mentors at the campus:

The older kids did their 720 speech. You only have 720 days of high school from the day you start until the day you end. The [mentors] were developing that for the younger students to impart to them the importance of not messing up in the ninth grade. But they are not hearing it from the teachers, they are hearing it from their peers.... We felt that this was a good utilization and a good experience for the mentors and a good example for the [ninth-grade] students.

As social activities, some campuses also had specific sessions that focused on building academic skills related to resilience and persistence in high school. There were some activities in which the primary goal was to learn about time management and organization, but more often these skills were incorporated by teachers and staff into all aspects of the summer program experience. The following academic strategies and social activities were observed at four sites:

- **Academic Strategies** (4 campuses)—Students learned about group problem solving and trial and error during science activities, teachers and staff worked with students who struggled with a mathematics activity until all members of the group experienced success with the correct answer, and note taking and test strategies were discussed during an English language arts session.
- **Social Activities** (3 campuses)—Summer programs matched upper-class mentors to incoming freshmen, structured small-group activities to foster cooperation, provided opportunities for students to get to know each other before the beginning of high school, and helped to improve communication skills through group discussions.

Transition and Planning Activities. Some campuses also offered activities that specifically addressed the transition to high school and assisted students in planning for the future. During interviews, the most frequently mentioned activities focused on explaining course credits and high school grades, as well as classes required for graduation. Respondents also mentioned activities that focused on study skills and time management, as well as on college and career preparation. One program coordinator shared the focus of one of these planning activities:

If they don't pass a high school class the first time, they have to take it again. There is no other route and that is a very different scenario for a lot of them from coming through the lower grades where they could fail a course, and still be promoted for the whole grade. I felt like [program participants] had a much better grasp of that than many freshmen entering in the fall.

One middle school teacher discussed an approach to planning for the future used in their program:

I tell the [students] don't let your surroundings and your parents' income be a factor, don't use that as an excuse.... There are grants out there that will pay for your college. So I do speak a lot, motivational stuff, and they listen.

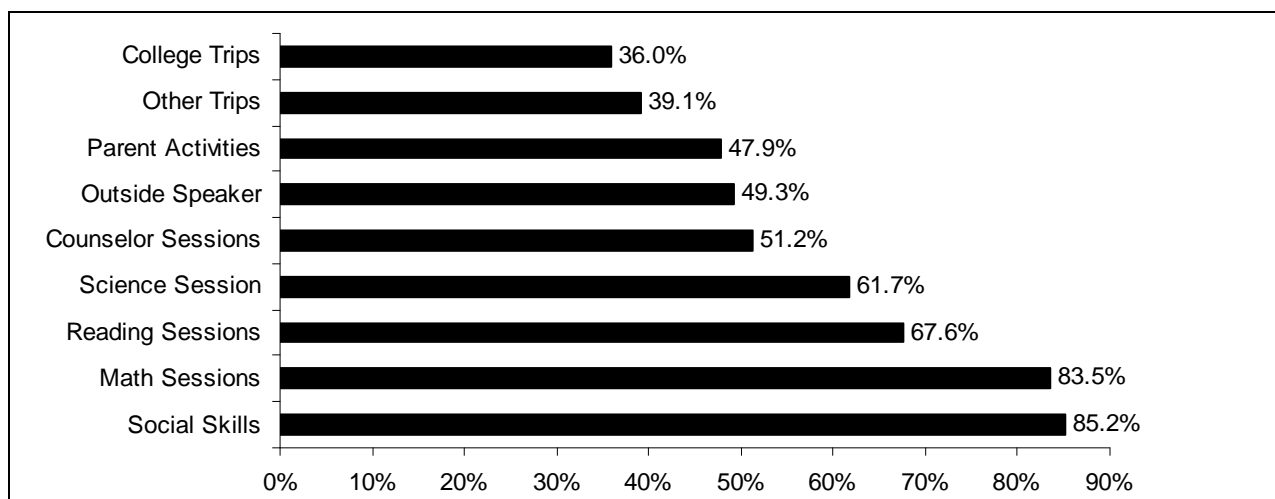
Other transition activities described by interview respondents included a tour of the school building, meeting the teachers and administrators, setting student goals, reviewing school rules and guidelines, and learning about extracurricular activities.

Some of the high school transition and planning activities observed during summer site visits were group discussion of credits needed for graduation, calculating grade point averages, and using a graphic organizer to map out their personal goals and steps needed to achieve those goals.

Student Participation in Specific Summer Transition Activities

Information from the student data collection provided details about how many students actually participated in summer transition activities, which is presented in Figure 2. Activities designed to develop social and behavioral skills were most commonly offered by programs and had the highest student participation rates. Of the students who attended at least one day of the summer program, more than 85% participated in these social activities. Activities focused on developing student mathematics skills was the second most common activity category, with 84% of summer transition students participating in mathematics sessions. Of note, only 48% of students and their parents participated in parent activities offered during the summer program.

Figure 2. Percentages of Summer Transition Students Who Participated in Specific Activities (N = 3221)



Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Student Data Collection (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

The distribution of student participation across specific activities also serves as a representation of the types of activities offered during campus summer transition programs. Some of these activities, such as college or other educational trips, were not offered by all campus programs. Having the majority of students participate in social skills activities reflects the goals of many programs to increase student attachment and engagement through friendships and positive relationships with teachers and staff.

Parent Involvement in Summer Transition Program

One of the goals of the TNGTI program is to increase parent awareness of both high school policies and procedures needed to fulfill high school graduation requirements and to prepare students for college.¹⁹

¹⁹ Note that requirements related to parental involvement were not provided in the TNGTI blueprint given to participating campuses, and therefore grantees are not required to meet a specific level of parent participation for the 2009–10 school year. TEA plans to institute critical success measures related to parental involvement for future years of the TNGTI grant.

Two of the critical success factors identified by TEA program staff are aligned with these program goals: (1) providing an orientation for parents of entering ninth graders about high school policies and procedures and (2) creating opportunities for parents to get involved in student’s learning.²⁰ Questions on the types of parent activities offered and on the level of parent participation were in both the first campus progress report and interviews with program staff. During site visits, observers also looked for parent participation in summer activities. The student data collection also requested information on whether one or more parents of participating students attended program activities.

Parent Activities Offered

According to campus progress report data, the majority of campuses offered one or more parent outreach activities as part of their summer transition programs. Most campuses offered parent information sessions on school policies and student expectations (81%) and information sessions on high school graduation and college attendance (78%). Approximately 60% of the campuses held parent conferences, and 40% offered parent/student counseling sessions. In most cases, parent activities were offered once during the summer, although a small percentage of campuses offered such activities more frequently. Table 20 shows the types of parent activities offered and the frequency with which they occurred.

Table 20. Percentage of Campuses That Offered Various Parent Outreach Activities (N = 62)

Parent Outreach Activities	Activity Offered	Once During the Summer Program	Once per Week	Several Times per Week	Daily
Parent informational session on school’s policies/student expectations	80.7%	59.6%	17.7%	1.6%	1.6%
Information sessions on high school graduation/college attendance	77.5%	50.0%	12.9%	11.2%	3.2%
Parent conferences	59.7%	25.8%	14.5%	14.5%	4.8%
Parent/student counseling sessions	40.4%	20.9%	12.9%	3.2%	3.2%
Parent classes/workshops/seminars	33.9%	29.0%	3.2%	1.6%	0.0%
Parent shadows a student	21.0%	9.6%	0.0%	3.2%	8.0%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

²⁰ Another critical success factor identified by TEA program staff is advocacy and support of parent involvement by school administrators. No specific questions on administrator support of parent involvement were in the first campus report or in interviews conducted during summer site visits. Questions on administrator support of parent involvement have been included in subsequent data collections.

On the first campus progress report, schools indicated which activities were considered to be a major focus of their summer transition program. Overall, 39 campuses reported that parent activities were specifically offered as part of the program (63%), and 20 of those campuses indicated that these activities were a major focus of their summer transition program (32%). (See Appendix F, Table F1.)

Interviews with program staff during the summer site visits asked questions on parent involvement. All school sites held parent information sessions before the summer program, and some had greater attendance than others. The information sessions focused on explaining the purpose of the summer transition activities, talking about the incentives for students, and emphasizing how the program was different from summer school or other remediation. As one district staff member noted, “Once it was decided who the kids were going to be, we had the parent meeting. We explained it to the parents. It wasn’t a regular summer program.... The program is more on building self esteem, getting the kids ready for high school.”

Some campuses or districts planned to hold additional meetings to provide parents with information about school policies and expectations or to address specific parent concerns; as one ninth-grade coordinator explained,

We are having a parent meeting for the ninth-grade open house. The parents will come into the auditorium and get information about classes. They will get information about school rules and regulations, the dress code, the expectations. And the PTA is involved. They are volunteering and setting up a hospitality booth. They are asking parents to join the PTA. This will be specifically for the kids in the grant.

Parent Participation in Activities

The first campus progress report also requested estimates of the percentage of student participants whose parents attended activities offered during the summer transition program. The majority of campuses reported relatively low rates of parent participation. There were 27 campuses that estimated parent participation rates from 0 to 20% related to summer transition activities (44%). Of the campuses that reported higher parent participation, only 12 campuses estimated parent participation rates at greater than 80% related to summer transition activities (19%).²¹ Table 21 shows the number and estimated percentages of parents who attended summer transition activities.

²¹ In the first student data collection, campuses were asked to indicate for each participating student whether the student’s parent or guardian had attended any parent activities. The aggregated campus responses from the student data collection provide slightly different estimates of parent participation. Of the 59 campuses that provided student data, 52% ($n = 31$) reported parent participation rates of 20% or less, and 39% ($n = 23$) reported that *no* parents participated in parent activities. An additional 7% ($n = 4$) reported parent participation rates between 21% and 40%. Approximately 32% of campuses ($n = 19$) reported parent participation rates of 81% or higher. Although the estimates from the first campus progress report and student data collection differ, both suggest that parent participation rates were relatively low at most campuses.

Table 21. Estimated Percentages of Parents of TNGTI Students Who Attended Summer Transition Program Activities (N = 62)

Estimated Parent Participation Rates	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
81–100%	12	19.4%
61–80%	7	11.3%
41–60%	1	1.6%
21–40%	15	24.2%
0–20%	27	43.5%

Source: Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

In open-ended comments on the first campus progress report, 12 campuses specifically mentioned they faced challenges related to parental involvement (19%). Campuses mentioned problems with low parent buy-in or support for the program, difficulties contacting the parents, and an identified a need to plan for and coordinate with other staff members to increase parent involvement.

The parents at most of the visited schools were minimally involved with the summer transition program activities. Interview respondents reported that some parents stayed to observe activities the first day, but that the primary involvement of parents was in making sure their children came to the program. A ninth-grade coordinator indicated that “The parents just drop the kids off. We have had a few stay and observe, but really we have not involved the parents at all.”

During summer interviews, several staff members at three visited campuses provided positive comments on parent involvement. One program coordinator noted that “The opportunity to directly work with parents was extremely effective and was enlightening for teaching staff.” Some programs had a final day of celebration or planned picnics or other social events for parents, students, and school staff. One respondent explained that

When parents and staff had the opportunity to see the students come to the culminating reception in professional attire and make their presentations, it was an amazingly positive experience for everyone involved.

Although structured observations of program activities were conducted at four of the campuses, no parental involvement was observed during those visits. Interview respondents mentioned that all summer programs had an open-door policy allowing parents to come and observe or participate, but the extent to which the information was advertised to parents is unknown. In addition, observations were not conducted on the first or last day of any of the summer transition programs, the days when interview respondents said that parents would most likely be involved.

Perceived Impact of the Summer Transition Program

Descriptive information was collected on the initial perceptions campus respondents had about the effect of summer transition activities on participating students and program staff. Questions on which program activities were viewed as most and least effective in preparing students for ninth grade formed part of the first campus progress report. Interviews with program staff asked questions on the perceived impact on students and teachers, and site observations noted the level of student engagement during various summer activities.

Impact on Student Participants

The first campus progress report asked campuses to indicate which summer transition activities they thought were most effective or least effective in preparing students for ninth grade. A list of 15 activities was provided. The list was based on the schedule of summer transition activities that campuses had originally included in their TNGTI grant application. (See Appendix F, Table F2.)

Most Effective Summer Transition Activities. Respondents first indicated whether a campus offered a specific activity during the summer transition program, and second whether that offered activity was considered to be effective in preparing students for ninth grade. Of the campuses that offered training in study skills, 64% indicated that this activity was considered to be most effective for students. The following summer transition activities also were considered to be the most effective by the campuses that offered those activities: familiarizing students with the high school facilities (63%), building peer relationships (60%), opportunities to earn course credit (58%), and training in behavioral skills (57%). Table 22 shows the distribution of responses for the top five summer activities considered to be most effective in preparing students for ninth grade by campuses that offered these activities.

Table 22. Summer Transition Activities Considered Most Effective in Preparing Students for Ninth Grade by Campuses Offering These Activities

Most Effective Summer Transition Activities	Offered	Most Effective	
	Number of Campuses	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Training in study skills (e.g., note taking, time management)	55	35	63.6%
Orientation activities to familiarize students with high school facilities	57	36	63.2%
Peer relationship building (e.g., team building, mentors)	48	29	60.4%
Opportunities to earn course credits	19	11	57.9%
Training in behavioral skills	44	25	56.8%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

In open-ended comments on the campus progress report, one respondent noted that “The TNGTI program made a huge impact on our students who attended. They were more prepared to enter high school and I feel that the attitude they entered high school with will propel them to success.” Another respondent wrote, “Connections between teacher and students are strong and positive, leading the way to a successful high school experience. Parents were pleased with the program and the results heard from their children.”

Least Effective Summer Transition Activities. The campus progress report also asked respondents to indicate which of the offered activities were considered to be least effective in preparing students for ninth grade. Respondents indicated that community service (29%), parent activities (23%), and college and career-related visits (19%) were the least effective activities offered during the summer, but no further explanation was given on the campus progress report form. It appears that activities focusing on life outside high school and aside from long-term career goals were seen as less effective in preparing students specifically for entering ninth grade. Table 23 shows the distribution of responses for the summer activities considered to be least effective by campuses that offered such activities.

Table 23. Summer Transition Activities Considered Least Effective in Preparing Students for Ninth Grade by Campuses Offering These Activities

Least Effective Summer Transition Activities	Offered	Least Effective	
	Number of Campuses	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Community service activities	14	4	28.6%
Parent involvement activities	39	9	23.1%
Educational or career-related field trips	37	7	18.9%
College site visits	27	5	18.5%
Academic instruction in elective courses	36	4	11.1%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

During site visit interviews, program staff were asked whether students had benefited from the summer transition program and in what ways. The most frequently mentioned benefit to students was a noticeable decrease in fear and anxiety among program participants and an increase in excitement about high school. One high school teacher noted she saw an increase in student self-confidence: “If they didn’t think they could really do anything before, maybe they are poor or they think they are dumb, this helped them to see they are not stupid.”

Another high school administrator stated that being familiar with the campus went a long way toward reducing anxiety for the incoming freshmen:

One of the big fears of ninth-grade students coming into high school is the building. So we are hoping that with a longer program, they are more familiar with the facility and the teachers. And they have their mentors to rely on. That fear is gone so they can concentrate more on their academics and become successful.

Program staff also mentioned that students benefitted from positively socializing with peers and upperclassmen, and from improvements in their basic academic skills, study strategies, and core content knowledge. A ninth-grade coordinator observed that the program participants have “already bonded with each other in the summer as a group of kids. And then they are not out on an island all by themselves walking into an algebra class.” Preparing program participants to be successful in high school was seen as the greatest benefit to students by one high school administrator:

These kids are learning how to take notes. That is something that I was never taught. No one sat me down and taught me how to take notes, or sat me down and taught me how to make goals and to pace myself to reach those goals.... And these are things that are being focused on in these [summer] classes.

Observed Student Engagement in Summer Transition Activities. At the four campuses where the evaluation team observed summer transition activities, student engagement was high at two sites. Where there was high student engagement, participating students asked questions, focused on completing their work, worked effectively in teams, concentrated on the task at hand, and paid attention to instructions and details related to the activities. The other two sites were characterized by a mix of observed levels of high and medium student engagement. At these sites, some of the classroom groups were characterized by students who were highly engaged with the teacher and the activities. Other observed groups, however, were less focused on the activities, with the result that the more engaged groups had to wait for them to catch up. All four sites showed a high level of positive energy among the observed students. In addition, students worked successfully in groups and had positive interactions with teachers. As to student engagement, discipline did not appear to be a problem at any of the campuses during the observations, and students respectfully listened to the information presented by teachers and student mentors.

Impact on Program Staff and Teachers

During summer site visits, program staff were asked to identify any ways in which teachers or staff had benefited from their involvement in the summer transition program. The most frequently mentioned benefit to teachers was being able to meet the students and get to know them before the beginning of the school year. Interview respondents said that teachers were able to form bonds with program participants and build positive relationships with them as they started ninth grade. One high school teacher commented on the rewards gained from helping students in the program:

I love the kids and I love the idea of being able to help them, and I feel that that is my reward. To know that I have made a difference and I have helped them feel at home here, with feeling comfortable with that first step in working towards graduation. To me, that is so huge.

Program staff also mentioned that teachers were able to see student strengths and weaknesses before the beginning of the year, and could better prepare students for high school coursework. A middle school administrator noticed the positive impact that the summer transition program had on the ability of ninth-grade teachers to assess the academic levels of incoming freshmen:

The [teachers] are already several steps ahead. They know where our students are at, what levels they are at. They don't have to waste so much time at the beginning of the year reviewing information that they covered back in eighth grade. So I think there should be some gains there.

The Early Warning Data System and Intervention Services

After the implementation of the summer transition program, campuses are required to monitor the progress of program participants and provide intervention services based on specific criteria. The data collected from the first campus progress report and interviews conducted during summer site visits provided information about the planning and preliminary implementation of the early warning data system at participating schools. Campuses also provided information about planned TNGTI intervention services for the upcoming school year. Additional details about the actual implementation of the early warning data system and related interventions will be collected through the second and third campus progress reports, a staff survey, and spring site visits.

Early Warning Data System Planning

The early warning data system is the second of the three major components of the TNGTI grant, as specified in the TNGTI program guidelines and blueprint. District or campus use of an early warning data system to monitor students for signs of falling behind during their ninth-grade year also was identified as a critical success factor by TEA program staff. The first campus progress report asked questions about planning for the implementation of an early warning data system. These questions asked about any changes to the measures of student progress that campuses had originally included in their TNGTI grant applications, whether there was collaboration between the middle school and high school on the early warning data system, whether administrators discussed the monitoring system with teachers and other staff, and whether participating students would be monitored differently from other ninth-grade students during the year.

According to the TNGTI program blueprint, all grantees were required to have a minimum of three indicators in the early warning data system, and a minimum of two measures for each indicator. Compared with the initial grant application data, 12 campuses indicated that they had made changes to the measures of academic performance, behavior, and attendance on which intervention services are recommended to students (19%). In an open-ended response, the changes the campuses most frequently mentioned mainly clarified criteria for the number of instances of the previously established occurrences (e.g., absences or disciplinary actions). Several respondents indicated that a measure was removed or added and provided an explanation for the adjustment. Overall, the adjustments were minor and did not substantially differ from what was originally proposed in the grant applications.

The majority of campuses (76%) reported that school administrators had at least some discussion with teachers and staff on how the TNGTI participants would be monitored during the school year using the early warning data system. Table 24 shows the distribution of responses to this question.

Table 24. Extent to Which Administrators Discussed the Early Warning Data System With Teachers and Other Staff (N = 62)

	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Very much	18	29.0%
Some	29	46.8%
Very little	11	17.7%
Not at all	4	6.5%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

The campus progress report also asked the extent to which middle school and high school staff collaborated in planning the early warning data system. The majority of respondents indicated that there was at least some collaboration between the high school and the middle schools on early warning data system planning (81%). Table 25 shows the range of responses on high school and middle school collaboration on the early warning data system.

Table 25. Extent of High School and Middle School Collaboration in Planning the Early Warning Data System (N = 62)

	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Very much	17	27.4%
Some	33	53.2%
Very little	8	12.9%
Not at all	4	6.5%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Overall, 37 out of 62 campuses indicated that students participating in the TNGTI program would be monitored differently during the school year from other ninth-grade students (60%). In open-ended responses on the campus progress report, respondents indicated that the primary differences were the use of the early warning data system measures and data to monitor TNGTI participants (65%) and that specific staff members had been assigned to track this group of students (54%). Table 26 shows the most frequently mentioned ways in which campuses planned to monitor TNGTI program participants differently from other ninth-grade students.

Table 26. How TNGTI Students Will Be Monitored Differently From Other Ninth-Grade Students (N = 37)

Monitoring of TNGTI Students	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Early warning data system measures used to monitor TNGTI participants	24	64.9%
Specific staff assigned to monitor TNGTI participants	20	54.1%
More frequent monitoring of TNGTI participants	12	32.4%
More parent contact/home visits for TNGTI participants	8	21.6%
TNGTI participants flagged in student data system	7	18.9%
Teachers aware of TNGTI participants	5	13.5%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

During site visits, program staff were not directly asked about the early warning data system, but several interview respondents offered details on their plans for the upcoming school year. For some campuses, the early warning data system would be a new system to monitor students, while others were able to use data systems that had previously been in place. One ninth-grade coordinator stated that the TNGTI students would be tracked with the existing campus data system:

The early warning data system is something we already had in place with Operation Ninth Grade. The report basically gives us all the data that we need. The only thing we are going to need to pull out is discipline data. But basically our progress reports that we have tell us what the students failed, their grades, their TAKS scores, their absences. Everything is in this report.

Early Warning Data System Implementation

The first campus progress report asked three questions specifically related to the implementation of the early warning data system. These questions focused on the readiness of the system and the staff at the beginning of the school year, how many staff members were explicitly responsible for monitoring student progress, and how frequently the early warning data system would be used to determine intervention services for struggling students throughout the year.

The majority of campuses indicated agreement or strong agreement with statements related to the implementation of the early warning data system. Almost all respondents agreed that the indicators and measures were based on research (95%), that specific staff had been assigned to monitor the TNGTI students (92%), that there was a clear understanding of how the early warning data system would be used to determine intervention services (90%), and that staff members were aware of the measures used to identify students (90%). It should be noted that campuses are required to complete progress reports and these reports are reviewed by TEA program staff to assess compliance with grant

requirements. Responses provided by campuses may therefore have been influenced by a desire to show compliance with grant requirements.

When the first campus progress report was submitted in late September, fewer respondents agreed with the statement that the ninth-grade early warning data system was ready to use for the fall 2009 semester (82%). In addition, even fewer respondents agreed with the statement that staff had been adequately trained to use the early warning data system at that point in the school year (76%). Table 27 shows the distribution of responses related to the status of early warning data system implementation as of September 2009.

Table 27. Percentage of Campuses That Agree With Statements Related to Early Warning Data System Implementation (N = 62)

Early Warning Data System Implementation	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The indicators and measures chosen for the early warning data system are based on current research.	1.6%	3.2%	51.6%	43.5%
Specific staff have been assigned to monitor or coordinate the monitoring of TNGTI students .	3.2%	4.8%	53.2%	38.7%
There is a clear understanding of how the measures will be used to determine if a student is in need of intervention services.	1.6%	8.1%	54.8%	35.5%
Involved staff are aware of what the measures are for identifying students for intervention services through the early warning data system.	1.6%	8.1%	59.7%	30.6%
The ninth-grade early warning data system is ready for use at the campus for the fall 2009 semester.	4.8%	12.9%	56.5%	25.8%
Involved school staff have been adequately trained in the use of the early warning data system	6.5%	17.7%	53.2%	22.6%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

On the first campus progress report, schools identified staff members who have explicit responsibility for monitoring students using the early warning data system: grant coordinators (77%), assistant principals (69%), and high school counselors (69%). Within campuses, multiple staff members are often responsible for monitoring the progress of students. Table 28 shows the types of staff members who are responsible for early warning data system monitoring at TNGTI campuses and the number and percentage of campuses that reported that specific staff members had been assigned this responsibility. The mean represents the average number of individuals in a given role who were identified as being responsible for early warning data system monitoring.

Table 28. High School Staff Responsible for Monitoring Students Through the Early Warning Data System (N = 62)

Staff Members Involved in Monitoring TNGTI Students	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses	Mean Number of Staff
Grant coordinators	48	77.4%	1.0
Assistant principals	43	69.4%	1.7
Counselors	43	69.4%	1.7
Core subject teachers	35	56.4%	5.4
Interventionists	33	53.2%	1.5
Department chairs or team leads	25	40.3%	4.0
Elective teachers	23	37.1%	3.4
Other	22	35.5%	1.3
None	1	1.6%	0.0

Source: Data from the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Responses therefore do not sum to 100%.

The campus progress report also asked respondents to indicate how frequently they planned to use the early warning data system to identify struggling students for intervention services. The most frequently chosen time intervals were fairly evenly divided between every three weeks (40%) and every six weeks (34%). Table 29 shows the different monitoring periods campuses planned to use to identify students in need of intervention services.

Table 29. Frequency With Which Early Warning Data System Will Be Used to Identify Students in Need of Intervention Services (N = 62)

Monitoring Periods	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Three-week progress period	25	40.3%
Six-week grading period	21	33.9%
Monthly	1	1.6%
Weekly	7	11.3%
Daily	3	4.8%
Other (e.g. biweekly, as needed)	5	8.1%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

During summer site visit interviews, several program staff members shared positive comments about how the early warning data system would be used to identify students and determine needed intervention services. Many sites were eager to start using the early warning data system. As one district staff member stated, “When schools found out that a tool [to track students] was going to be offered to them, they were excited about it.” One ninth-grade coordinator saw the TNGTI program as an opportunity to introduce a systematic way to identify and monitor struggling students at the high school:

We had a vision of what we wanted the [system] to look like, but we had no ability to make it happen. Now we have the funding so we can implement the strategies that we have been wanting to implement, or that we have struggled to implement in the past. It has been difficult because it all had to be by hand. We would go to this meeting and that meeting and chase after everybody in order to do it. This is more streamlined and efficient so we can get it done more quickly and have the information in our hands.

In open-ended comments on the campus progress reports, several campuses provided suggestions for improving implementation of the early warning data system. Sample suggestions were to develop a system that was compatible with monitoring systems currently in use, allow more time for implementation of the system at the beginning of the school year, and enlist district support in extracting student data.

Intervention Services Planning

Provision of intervention services for struggling ninth-grade students is the third major component of the TNGTI grant, as specified in the TNGTI program blueprint. Providing effective interventions for students who show signs of falling behind is also one of the critical success factors identified by TEA program staff. The first campus progress report asked three questions on planning intervention services for TNGTI program participants. Questions focused on differences between available intervention services for TNGTI program participants and other students, the extent to which interventions had been established at the campus, whether staff had been trained and put in place to provide services, and whether there was a system to notify students and parents about interventions.

Overall, 30 out of 62 campuses indicated that the intervention services planned for the TNGTI program participants would be different from those typically available to struggling students (48%). In open-ended responses on the campus progress report, the most frequently mentioned differences were greater parent contact (40%), additional support staff assigned to this group of students (27%), and additional interventions such as workshops, seminars, classes, and tutoring (23%) for TNGTI program participants. Table 30 shows the differences in the intervention services being offered for TNGTI program participants compared to other ninth-grade students.

Table 30. Differences Between Intervention Services for TNGTI Students and Those for Other Ninth-Grade Students (N = 30)

Differences in Intervention Services	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
More frequent parental contact, home visits	12	40.0%
Additional support staff (e.g., intervention specialists, tutors)	8	26.7%
Specific workshops, seminars, or classes	7	23.3%
Additional tutoring opportunities	7	23.3%
More frequent conferences (e.g., with teachers, counselors)	7	23.3%
Specific use of an early warning data system	6	20.0%
Specific team or small learning community support	5	16.7%
More frequent progress monitoring	5	16.7%
Specific activities (e.g., college tours, field experiences)	5	16.7%
Earlier response to warning indicators	4	13.3%
Mentoring opportunities (e.g., teachers, upperclassmen)	3	10.0%
Specific incentives or awards	3	10.0%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Almost all campuses agreed or strongly agreed that a clear method for delivering intervention services had been established (97%) as well as for determining whether interventions were producing the desired outcomes for TNGTI program participants (97%). Most campus progress report respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that high school staff had been assigned to deliver intervention services to the TNGTI program participants (92%).

Fewer respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that high school staff had been fully trained to deliver these intervention services at the time the first campus progress report were submitted (85%). In addition, fewer respondents agreed that there was a current process in place to inform parents and students of identification for intervention services and intervention services to be provided (85%). Table 31 shows the distribution of responses related to the planned implementation of intervention services at participating campuses.

Table 31. Percentage of Campuses That Agree With Statements Related to the Implementation of Intervention Services for Identified Students (N = 62)

Implementation of Intervention Services	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A clear method for delivering intervention services to participating students has been established.	1.6%	1.6%	66.1%	30.6%
A clear method for determining if intervention services provided to students are achieving desired outcomes has been established.	3.2%	0.0%	67.7%	29.0%
Staff have been assigned to deliver intervention services.	1.6%	6.4%	62.9%	29.0%
Staff have been trained in the delivery of intervention services.	3.2%	11.2%	58.0%	27.4%
A process is in place to inform students and parents of identification through the early warning data system and the intervention services determined appropriate for the student.	3.2%	11.2%	61.2%	24.1%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Information from the first campus progress report and summer site visits provide a snapshot of how participating campuses planned to implement the early warning data system and intervention services for their upcoming school year. Any changes from the first campus progress report to the second campus progress report related to the actual implementation of the early warning data system and intervention services will be noted during final analysis. Further data collected from the staff survey and spring site visit interviews can provide additional details about these important aspects of the TNGTI program.

Barriers and Facilitators to Program Implementation

Questions on the first campus progress report and program staff interviews asked respondents to describe the barriers and facilitators they had encountered in planning for the TNGTI program and in implementing the summer transition program. Campuses also were asked to report on factors that specifically contributed to the success of their summer programs.

Barriers

In the first campus progress report, 45 campuses answered an open-ended question asking whether their campuses had encountered any barriers to effectively implementing the TNGTI program. Of the campuses that reported barriers, the most frequently mentioned related to student participation in the program (22%). There were problems initially identifying and recruiting students, maintaining student interest and attendance during the summer transition program, and losing eligible students to overlapping programs. One respondent noted that

During the summer it was hard to be able to get all 100 students to attend the summer sessions...because we were to target at-risk students and those at-risk students were required to attend summer sessions at their middle schools.

Additional barriers included lack of parent support (20%), a delayed start due to scheduling or grant funding (18%), and inadequate personnel or a change in staff for the program (18%). One respondent made a comment about the timing of program funding:

One issue was not receiving the funding in time to order the necessary supplies and to take into account the shipping time before the program began. If funds had been released to us in early June instead of July, there would have been time.

Table 32 presents a summary of the barriers that respondents said affected their ability to effectively implement features of the TNGTI program.

Table 32. Barriers to Implementing Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program (N = 45)

Barriers to TNGTI Program	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Initial identification and recruitment of students	10	22.2%
Student interest, attendance in program activities	10	22.2%
Overlapping programs (e.g., summer school)	10	22.2%
Lack of parent support	9	20.0%
Delayed start, delayed funding	8	17.8%
Inadequate personnel, change in staff	8	17.8%
Problems with the early warning data system, technology	7	15.6%
Inadequate funding	4	8.9%
Limited support from feeder middle schools	4	8.9%
Lack of transportation	3	6.7%
More time for planning and training staff	3	6.7%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Some respondents indicated multiple barriers, responses therefore do not sum to 100%.

The challenges most frequently mentioned during interviews with program staff at selected sites related to confusion about the grant guidelines, problems initially identifying students, and having insufficient time to plan for the program. One high school counselor said the delay in student recruitment led to fewer participants in the offered summer activities:

I think maybe if we would have had more time at the end of last year to open it up to more students and just have the awareness out there for the parents from eighth grade, I think we would have had more students coming.

For some campuses, there was miscommunication between the district and the school about how grant money could be spent on various program components. Other challenges mentioned in the interviews echoed the data from the first campus progress report. Overall, interview respondents stated they would have liked more time at the beginning of the program to recruit students and plan program activities. As one district staff member stated,

If we had got the grant a little bit earlier, that would have given us a little more time to really think about what type of program we wanted. Then we could really go in and analyze the kids that we are recommending for the program.

Facilitators

In the first campus progress report, 36 respondents answered an open-ended question asking about factors that had facilitated their implementation of the TNGTI program. Among campuses that identified facilitators to program implementation, respondents most frequently emphasized the importance of having supportive and enthusiastic staff for the program (53%). One respondent wrote that it had been very beneficial to have “a proactive, zealous intervention team who is committed to the success of our ninth-grade students.” Another respondent highlighted the positive efforts of individual staff members on the campus: “The ninth-grade counselors and grant coordinator have played a very proactive role in the implementation phase.”

Other facilitators were a high level of communication and collaboration within the high school and between campuses (19%), assistance provided by external support agencies or other programs (17%), and grant funding (14%). On funding, one respondent noted that “This grant has been pivotal in allowing us to offer many extra services to our ninth graders to help them to be successful.” Table 33 presents a summary of the facilitators to program implementation identified by campuses that completed the first campus progress report.

Table 33. Facilitators to Implementing Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program (N = 36)

Facilitators to TNGTI Program	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Support from staff (e.g., teachers, counselors, coordinators)	19	52.8%
Collaboration and communication	7	19.4%
External support agencies and other programs	6	16.7%
Grant funding	5	13.9%
District support	4	11.1%
The early warning data system and technology	3	8.3%
Parent support	1	2.8%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Some respondents indicated multiple facilitators, responses therefore do not sum to 100%.

During summer site visits, program staff also stated that the biggest facilitator to the program was the commitment and passion of the teachers, administrators, and other support staff. One high school administrator also emphasized the importance of collaboration among program staff: “The group dynamics of the [teachers] just fits so wonderfully that it made the program even better. These teachers are just very enthusiastic and very motivated.” A high school teacher involved in the program appreciated the chance to work with other teachers in planning program activities:

I have never had a program like this where we [teachers] had a full week of preparation together. We get together and talk about what we are going to do, how we are going to do it, and give a final product on how it is going to look.... And afterwards we give a briefing on how it went. I found it very beneficial.

Other facilitators mentioned were similar to those identified in first campus progress report data, including having positive and motivated students, good program planning, a small student-teacher ratio, positive collaboration with feeder middle schools, parent support, and grant funding.

During summer site visits, program staff were directly asked about the level of support the campuses received from the district. The most frequently mentioned form of district support was funding for transportation not covered by the grant. A high school teacher said that “I know we had a lot of coordination [with the central office] in terms of transportation, and that was worked out for us.” Districts also provided supplies, food for students, additional personnel pay, and assistance with the initial grant application. Program staff also said that the primary role of the district was to provide oversight for the program. District coordinators monitored the campuses to make sure that grant funds were properly allocated and appropriately used. One district staff member made sure that campuses completed and retained required paperwork:

[The district] provides guidance more than anything else and direction on how the [campuses] need to get things situated.... There needs to be continuity and somebody needs to make sure they connect the dots. If we wouldn't have told them they needed to keep that documentation, they would not have had that documentation.

Factors Viewed as Contributing to Success of Summer Transition Program

The first campus progress report listed 17 factors that could have contributed to the success of the summer transition program. Campuses were asked to indicate whether these factors were present and how important these factors were to the success of their summer transition programs. (See Appendix F, Table F3, for the full list of possible contributing factors.)

The primary factor that was considered at least moderately important to the success of the program was the availability of adequate teaching and support staff to facilitate program activities (92%). In open-ended comments, campuses were asked to note what facilitators helped with program implementation. The importance of the expertise and commitment of program staff was a common theme throughout the open-ended comments provided in the campus progress reports. One respondent noted

Choosing ninth-grade teachers who have the passion to teach students and pass on the joy of learning to those students is the best facilitator. This joy was seen by students who called their classmates and who reported to school with their parents for registration into the TNGTI program.

Almost all respondents indicated that providing students with information about the transition to high school (92%), strategies to increase resilience and persistence (89%), and opportunities to get to know teachers and administrators (89%) were at least moderately important to the success of their summer programs. Having access to appropriate facilities was also included as one of the primary factors for a successful program (89%). Table 34 shows the distribution of responses for the top five factors identified by campuses as contributing to the success of their summer transition programs.

Table 34. Percentage of Campuses That Indicated Which Success Factors Contributed to the Summer Transition Program (N = 62)

Success Factors	Activity Did Not Occur	Minimally Important	Moderately Important	Very Important
Adequate teaching and support staff available for the summer sessions	6.5%	1.6%	8.0%	83.9%
Information and training provided to students on the transition to high school	6.5%	1.6%	12.9%	79.0%
Students provided with strategies to increase resilience or persistence through development of social and academic strategies	9.7%	1.6%	12.9%	75.8%
Students provided an opportunity to get to know high school teachers and administrators	6.5%	4.8%	11.3%	77.4%
Facilities (e.g., classrooms, auditorium) appropriate for summer activities	6.5%	4.8%	11.3%	77.4%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

During summer site visits, program staff provided similar responses in the interviews pertaining to factors that contributed to the success of their summer programs. The most frequently cited factor was the commitment and passion of the teachers and other staff who were involved in the program. A high school administrator noted that having dedicated teachers and staff was crucial to the program’s success: “Vision and everything is all fine and good, but if you don’t have the right people to carry it out and to maintain that level of enthusiasm, it is not ever going to happen.” Another middle school administrator emphasized the importance of program staff working together as a team:

It took all of us. It took an entire team to keep [students] there in the transitional program—the teachers, through their instruction, the administration, letting them know that we are here for them, whatever they needed...letting them know that they are here on a voluntary basis, [that] we are here too, and they can do this.

Details about other barriers and facilitators encountered during the school year related to the early warning data system and the intervention services will be collected through the second and third campus progress reports, a staff survey, and spring site visits.

Program Sustainability and Suggested Modifications

On the campus progress report, respondents were asked to describe the likelihood that they would continue the TNGTI program or a similar program next year, and if so, what modifications they would like to see to planning and implementation. Questions related to program sustainability and suggested modifications were also asked during interviews with program staff.

Program Sustainability

The majority of campuses indicated that they were likely or very likely to continue the TNGTI program or a similar program next year (79%). Table 35 shows the distribution of campus responses related to program continuation.

Table 35. Likelihood Campus Will Implement the TNGTI Program or a Similar Program Next Year (N = 62)

Implementation of TNGTI Program Next Year	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Very likely	37	59.7%
Likely	12	19.4%
Unlikely	2	3.2%
Very unlikely	7	11.3%
Don't know/Not sure	4	6.5%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

All program staff interviewed during summer site visits said they would like to continue the summer transition program next year. Many expressed the desire to expand the program to include more students because they had seen a positive impact on program participants. Program staff also said that they planned to take what they had learned from their experiences this year and make improvements to planning and program activities for next year. A district staff member commented that

I am sure the campuses, once they see the value of this, would want to continue to follow through because many of our campuses already have some type of bridge program, but with this grant opportunity, this gives us a chance to go even deeper.

Interview respondents said they hoped the grant funding would be available next year, but most stated they would try to find funding from other sources if necessary so they could continue to offer summer transition activities for their incoming ninth-grade students.

Suggested Modifications

In response to a campus progress report question asking whether modifications were needed to the TNGTI program, most respondents indicated that minor modifications are needed (40%) or that some modifications are necessary (36%). Table 36 shows the distribution of responses related to program modifications.

Table 36. Percentage of Campuses That Indicated Modifications Are Needed to the TNGTI Program (N = 62)

Modifications Needed to TNGTI Program	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
No modifications are needed	8	12.9%
Minor tweaks are needed	25	40.3%
Some modifications are necessary	22	35.5%
Major modifications are necessary	4	6.5%
Other	3	4.8%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

In the first campus progress report, 41 campuses provided suggestions for program modifications. Of the campuses that offered suggestions, the most frequent responses related to allowing greater flexibility in scheduling program activities (29%). One campus indicated that its district had a year-round schedule and that timelines for offering activities were inconsistent with the district schedule. Another respondent suggested providing more options for fulfilling the required days of summer programming:

Be flexible with the summer transition program requirements in terms of days to implement. I think there might be value in bringing the groups together in the fall and in the spring and limiting the days of the actual summer session.

Table 37 presents a summary of the top types of program modifications suggested by campuses that completed the first campus progress report. Besides a request for more scheduling flexibility, there were suggestions for more advance notice of funding (24%), an increase in funds or more flexibility in the budget (22%), and clarification of grant requirements and additional information about the program (20%).²² One respondent indicated that the timing of notification of funding limited the ability of the campus to acquire all the necessary materials for the summer transition program: “More advance notice of budgets and timelines [was needed] so that orders [for materials] could be placed and curriculum

²² TEA acknowledged that there was a delay in the posting of the grant application and issuance of NOGAs during the first year of this program based on transitions occurring at TEA related to program budget, program leadership, and program revisions. This delay led to some campuses encountering challenges with student recruitment and program implementation. In response to these concerns, TEA has made the application for the continuation grant available earlier in the school year and plans to issue the NOGAs in a timely manner to all participating districts.

could be more planned out ahead of time.” Appendix G provides the written responses for all suggested program modifications offered by participating campuses.

Table 37. Suggestions for TNGTI Program Modifications for Future Years (N = 41)

Suggestions for Program Modifications	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
Flexibility in scheduling of program activities	12	29.3%
More advance notice of funding and timelines	10	24.4%
Increase in funds, more flexible budgets	9	22.0%
Clarifications on program requirements and components	8	19.5%
Expand target student population	5	12.2%
Offer a wider variety of program activities, earn course credits	5	12.2%
More collaboration with feeder middle schools	4	9.8%
More parent involvement	3	7.3%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Some respondents had multiple suggestions, responses therefore do not sum to 100%.

During summer site visits, program staff offered similar suggestions for program modifications. The most frequently mentioned suggestion for TEA was to provide campuses with notification of funding earlier in the year. Schools wanted to have more time for teachers and staff to plan for the summer transition activities as well as advertise the program and recruit students. As one high school teacher said, “I just think that it could have been so much more successful if it had gotten off the ground sooner. And maybe had we been involved more in the planning process ahead of time...maybe we could do some in late April or early May. Then we could get our feet wet.” One ninth-grade coordinator agreed:

I would like to have more time at the middle school to recruit. I would like to have the funds earlier so we can start ordering things earlier. It is a timing issue. It is much better to be well organized and have everything done before they get here. And I would also include lesson planning time. A week of planning time is in the personnel budget so we can get all the teachers together. We can get all the teachers on the same page.

The most frequently mentioned changes for next year that campuses are planning to do involve improving communication with students about the program and starting student recruitment activities earlier. A high school teacher suggested that campuses needed to “get the information out there. No one knew what this program was about. Parents, kids, they just didn’t know. Having the information out there earlier and knowing what the program is will help.” Program staff also mentioned that they would

like to make adjustments to the summer program schedule to prevent overlap with other summer activities. Several also mentioned that they would like to involve additional students in the program. As one high school counselor commented,

If we are able to open it up maybe for more students, then we will have a better success rate because of that planning and that organizing. This year we were trying to experiment. We were trying to see what works and what doesn't work. I think if we have better planning of it, I think it is going to be better for our students.

Additional feedback and suggestions on program implementation and sustainability will be collected through the second and third campus progress reports, a staff survey, and spring site visits.

Preliminary Key Findings

Overall, findings related to the first steps of TNGTI grant program implementation at participating campuses are positive, suggesting that most aspects of the program are working well. Key findings are presented below, with some suggested adjustments for program planning and implementation. Further implications for the entire TNGTI program implementation will be presented in the final report.

Key Findings: Program Planning

Program Goals

Specific program goals varied considerably across campuses. Many campuses repeated the goals provided in the program guidelines (i.e., providing activities focused on core academic knowledge and skills, academic and social strategies, and transition to high school and beyond), while other campuses provided detailed background research in support of their own targeted goals. Although the majority of campuses reported that student preparation in core academic subjects was the primary goal of their ninth-grade transition programs, campuses varied in the extent to which they emphasized other TNGTI goals such as parent involvement or coordination between middle school and high school campuses. A possible concern is that some campuses did not view goals beyond what was to be offered to students as an important focus of their ninth-grade transition programs, even though they are listed as goals of the program in the TNGTI program guidelines.

Collaboration Between Middle School and High School Staff

One of the goals of the TNGTI grant program is to increase coordination between high schools and their feeder middle schools in planning for successful high school transitions and the alignment of efforts to reduce ninth-grade failure and dropout. The TNGTI program blueprint states that summer transition programs must be developed by a collaborative team of high school and middle school staff that includes, but is not limited to, teachers, administrators, and counselors. The majority of campuses reported that the focus of middle school and high school collaboration was primarily related to initial student identification and recruitment. Eight percent of the campuses reported that there was no collaboration between middle school and high staff, and 16% reported that fewer than three middle school staff members were involved in program planning.

The continuation of middle school and high school collaboration beyond the summer transition program varied considerably across campuses. Most campuses reported that middle school staff were involved in identifying and recruiting students for summer activities, but less than half indicated that middle school staff were involved in discussions on the goals and timelines for the program. In addition, approximately 20% of campuses reported that middle school staff had little or no involvement in planning the early warning data system. In making suggestions for program modifications, a small number of campuses noted the need for greater collaboration with middle schools. Because of the program goals of increasing collaboration and coordination between middle schools and high schools, these findings

suggest the need for broader involvement of middle school staff in program planning and implementation that goes beyond handing over the students in the summer.

Student Identification and Recruitment

Student recruitment was clearly a challenge for most of campuses participating in the program and was explicitly mentioned as a barrier to program implementation by several campuses. The TNGTI program guidelines provide information on the criteria for eligible students, which includes allowing participation on the basis of other factors identified by local program staff. Because of difficulties in recruiting students, many campuses opened enrollment in the summer transition program to all interested students, rather than specifically targeting students who were identified as being at risk for dropping out of school. Most campuses indicated that they used various sources of data (e.g., eighth-grade TAKS scores) to select students, and almost two thirds of the campuses reported that they also broadly advertised the availability of the program and included any interested students.

Among students identified for program participation, more than half had met the minimum passing standards in all subjects on the TAKS assessments. Overall, 52% of identified students met the minimum requirements in science, and 64% met the minimum requirements in mathematics; passing rates for the reading and social studies were even higher. Although many students identified for the TNGTI program met the minimum standards on the eighth-grade TAKS assessments, the mean scale scores of this group were still relatively low compared with the cut scores. Therefore, students who were able to graduate from eighth grade because they met the TAKS standards participated in the TNGTI program, but the mean scores suggest that they still struggled in the areas of mathematics and science. This information may have affected the choice of many campuses to focus primarily on these two subject areas for their summer transition program activities.

The most frequently mentioned reasons for nonparticipation were scheduling conflicts with other campus programs and conflicts with family vacations. A number of at-risk students identified for participation also attended summer school, making it difficult for some campuses to recruit these students for participation in the summer transition program. Late notification of grant awards also was mentioned as a challenge by several campuses. Some schools were reluctant to recruit students and plan their summer transition programs until grant notifications were received. Earlier notification of grant awards was requested by several campuses to provide the schools with more time to coordinate program schedules, identify and recruit students, and plan program activities.

Student Participation

Few campuses met their target goals for student participation in the summer transition program. Over a third of campuses reported that 40% or fewer of the students who were to be served by the program actually participated. Four campuses reported that none of the students who were identified for participation actually attended. Only 28% of the campuses had program participation rates of 80% or higher as measured against targets specified in TNGTI grant applications. Several campuses requested earlier notification of grant awards specifically so that they might have more time to identify and recruit students. A few also suggested that the population of students targeted for the program be expanded to

all ninth graders, allowing students not classified as at risk for retention to serve as positive peer models for the at-risk students.

Among students who participated in the summer transition program, attendance was relatively high. Across campuses, students participated in nine days of summer programming on average. Based on the number of days offered at each campus and the number of days each student actually attended, student participation was approximately 82% of the summer program activities offered at their campuses. In reporting barriers to program implementation, several campuses noted problems with student attendance and a lack of student interest in program activities. These issues may, however, have been due to initial problems with student recruitment rather than lack of interest among students who actually participated.

Key Findings: The Summer Transition Program

Program Length and Timing

All but five campuses offered summer transition programs that met the TNGTI program requirements for 10 consecutive days of summer programming. Half the campuses offered programs that were longer than 10 days. Approximately half the campuses offered their summer transition program in June, and most of the remaining campuses offered their programs in August. Because of the timing of other summer programs and the availability of staff, campuses might consider offering their summer transition programs later in the summer to allow more time for program planning and to carry student enthusiasm over into the beginning of the school year.

In offering suggestions for program modifications, several campuses requested greater flexibility in the length of summer programs and the scheduling of summer activities. Some campuses preferred to offer activities at different times during the summer or early in the school year. Providing more options for campuses to implement their programs could help campuses to address problems with student recruitment because some of the students who were identified for program participation were unable to attend because of other scheduled commitments.

Activities Offered

Summer transition programs offered a wide variety of activities that were consistent with the program goals of increasing student readiness in core academic subjects, providing students with an orientation to high school facilities and expectations, assisting students in planning for high school, and providing social supports and opportunities to develop peer relationships. Most campuses offered activities in all these areas, and the majority reported that these activities were a major focus of their summer transition programs.

During site visits, several interview respondents were unclear whether certain activities were funded by the program. Some noted that activities such as college site visits were not planned because program staff did not think such activities were allowed under the grant. Others were unsure whether funding for celebrations, food for students, or other incentives for student participation were allowed. In providing

suggestions for program modification, several campuses requested greater clarification of program guidelines and information on what activities could be funded by the grant.

Parent Involvement

Increasing parent awareness of high school requirements and expectations and involving them in planning for high school are among the goals of the TNGTI program. Although most campuses offered parent outreach activities, parent participation in these activities was reported to be relatively low. In the first campus progress report, approximately two thirds of responding campuses estimated that fewer than 40% of participating students had a parent who participated in program activities. At 20% of these campuses, no parent activities were offered during the summer program. Among campuses that did offer parent activities, only half indicated that these activities were a major focus of their summer transition program.

Findings from interviews confirm that program staff at some campuses did not view parent involvement as an important focus of their summer transition programs, and minimal efforts were made to involve parents in the program. Approximately 20% reported a lack of parental support as a major barrier to program implementation. The campuses that did have some success offered kickoff activities and culminating celebrations that parents could attend so as to be involved in the summer transition program. These findings suggest that TNGTI program goals and expectations for parent involvement need to be communicated more clearly to campuses, and more support provided by TEA in this area. Sharing strategies with campuses for increasing parent interest and involvement might also help to increase parent participation in program activities.

Success Factors and Perceived Impact

Campuses identified the most effective activities for preparing students for ninth grade as training in study skills, orientation activities, and peer relationship building. Perhaps because campuses were specifically asked about the effectiveness of program activities in preparing students for the ninth-grade school year, activities such as community service, parent outreach activities, and field trips were seen as less effective program activities. Overall, respondents indicated that the summer transition program had a positive impact on participating students and teachers. In interviews, program staff reported student benefits of the program as lower fear and anxiety related to attending high school, stronger friendships with classmates, and improvements in academic skills. Teachers also benefitted by meeting the students and identifying their strengths and weaknesses before school began.

The most commonly mentioned factor contributing to overall program success was the availability of staff and their enthusiasm for the program. Program staff also mentioned the importance of covering specific topics during the program (e.g., information on the transition to high school and social and academic strategies), providing the opportunity for students to form bonds with high school staff, and allowing incoming ninth graders to become familiar with the high school building and facilities. Approximately 80% of campuses indicated that they were likely or very likely to continue the TNGTI program or a similar program next year.

Key Findings: The Early Warning Data System and Intervention Services

The Early Warning Data System

In reporting on planning and implementation of an early warning data system, most campuses indicated that middle school and high school staff had at least some collaboration on planning the system. Most campuses also reported that school administrators had held at least some discussions with teachers and staff on how the early warning data system would be used during the school year to monitor students. All but a few campuses indicated that the early warning data system was ready for use during the fall 2009 semester, that staff had been assigned to monitor TNGTI students, and staff had been adequately trained on how to use the system. A majority of campuses reported that students in the TNGTI program would be monitored differently from other ninth-grade students. The most frequently mentioned differences were using the early warning data system measures and other data to monitor program participants and that specific staff had been assigned to track the TNGTI students.

In interviews, several respondents commented favorably on the possibilities offered by the early warning data system for systematically monitoring and tracking students. In the campus progress reports, a few campuses suggested that an early warning data system be developed that was compatible with other data systems currently in use, that more time be allowed for implementing the system at the beginning of the school year, and that districts provide more support in extracting student data. Because the findings presented in this report are based on data collected early in the school year, when many campuses were just beginning to implement their early warning data system, information on specific problems encountered in implementing the system are not yet available. Additional data on the implementation of the early warning data system will be collected in future campus progress reports, surveys, and interviews, with findings to be included in the final evaluation report.

Intervention Services

Almost all campuses reported that clear methods had been established for delivering intervention services to participating students, and also that a process had been established to determine whether interventions were producing the desired results. Most also reported that high school staff had already been assigned to deliver intervention services to the TNGTI program participants. Although the majority of campuses reported that staff had been trained to deliver intervention services and that there was a process in place to notify students and parents of planned interventions, there were a few campuses that had not yet established intervention services for TNGTI students at the time of the first campus progress report. Overall, approximately half the campuses reported that intervention services planned for the TNGTI program participants would differ from those typically available to struggling students. The most frequently mentioned differences were greater parent contact, the availability of additional support staff, and more workshops and tutoring opportunities for participating students. Overall implementation of the intervention services had not yet occurred when the data presented in this interim report were collected, and campuses could offer little additional feedback on planned intervention services. Additional data on implementation of intervention services will be collected in future campus progress reports, surveys, and interviews, with findings to be included in the final evaluation report.

Next Steps in the Evaluation

Additional data are being collected on program implementation, the impact the TNGTI program on students and teachers, and the cost effectiveness and sustainability of the program. The types of data to be collected follow. The types of data analyses to be conducted also are described.

Data Collection

Data-collection activities that are currently being completed or that will be undertaken between February and July 2010 are as follows:

- Administration of the second and third campus progress reports, which will focus on implementation of the early warning data system, delivery of intervention services, and barriers and facilitators to program implementation (January 2010 and April 2010)
- Collection of additional student participation data focusing on intervention services provided to TNGTI program participants, reasons that students were identified to receive these services, and 2009–10 data on student attendance, disciplinary incidents, and students' grades in core ninth-grade subjects; 2009–10 data on student disciplinary incidents and attendance also will be requested from TNGTI districts for ninth graders who are not participating in the TNGTI program²³ (January 2010 and April 2010)
- Interviews conducted with program staff at selected campuses on implementation of the early warning data system (or other monitoring system), delivery of intervention services, and barriers and facilitators to program implementation (February 2010)
- Administration of a staff survey to ninth-grade teachers, other school staff who work closely with ninth-grade students, and any other school personnel who have been involved in planning or implementing the TNGTI program (February–March 2010)
- Collection of data from participating districts on program expenditures (May 2010)

The following additional data have been requested from TEA for campuses participating in the program:

- Any 2009–10 TNGTI program expenditure data already collected by TEA
- Student-level data for all ninth-grade students who attend TNGTI campuses, including demographic data, and 2008–09 and 2009–10 student TAKS scores and 2008–09 data on student attendance and disciplinary incidents
- Campus level demographic data (e.g., total number of students, percentage of students who are economically disadvantaged students) and achievement data (e.g., percentage of students meeting the minimum standards on the TAKS assessments for 2008–09 and 2009–10)

²³ Because 2009–10 attendance data and data on student disciplinary incidents will not be available from TEA prior to the submission of the final evaluation report, these data are being requested from districts.

Data Analysis and Reporting

To assess program implementation and to evaluate the impact of the TNGTI program on teachers, the evaluation team will conduct descriptive analysis of student participation data and data from campus progress reports and staff surveys. Thematic analysis of additional interview data also will be conducted.

To assess the program's impact on students, two sets of analyses will be conducted: (1) a comparison of the outcomes of students participating in the program with those of similar students who are not participating in program and (2) an analysis of program components and factors associated with greater improvements in student outcomes.

Program participants will be matched with ninth-grade students at TNGTI campuses who are not participating in the program using propensity score matching, an approach that allows students to be matched on a variety of characteristics (e.g., demographic characteristics and prior academic achievement). The analysis of the program's impact on students will focus on four primary data sources related to student outcomes: (1) students' ninth-grade TAKS scores in reading and mathematics, (2) ninth-grade attendance, (3) ninth-grade course completion, and (4) ninth-grade retention. For all four measures, outcomes of participating students will be compared with the outcomes of students who did not participate (the comparison group). Student outcomes will be modeled with hierarchical linear modeling, a statistical technique that takes into account the nested nature of the data (students within schools).

To assess the cost effectiveness and sustainability of the program, the evaluation will conduct an overall cost analysis of program funds, conduct a cost-benefit analysis, and explore plans and barriers for continuing the program, using program expenditure data and data on barriers to program implementation and plans for future implementation obtained from campus progress reports, interviews, and the staff survey.

Findings from these analyses, together with additional details on the analytic methods used, will be presented in the final evaluation report to be delivered September 2010.

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Appendix A

As part of the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program, every participating high school campus was required to complete a campus progress report for TEA. The first campus progress report focused on program planning and implementation of the summer transition program, early warning data system, and related intervention services. The campus progress report #1 form was disseminated electronically to all TNGTI campuses in September 2009, and this form is included in its entirety below.

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Program Campus Progress Report #1

Grant Activities Conducted From Grant Inception Through August 31, 2009

This is the first of three progress reports that will be required for the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) program. This progress report will collect data on the planning and implementation of your TNGTI program, and will focus primarily on summer transition program activities that have occurred from the date of the Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) through August 31, 2009.

Program progress reports must be submitted in the time and manner requested by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Refer to application Schedule #4C – Reporting Requirements – for additional information. Failure to submit reports in a timely fashion may affect future funding. Please complete this report no later than **September 15, 2009**.

Questions related to completing this survey should be directed to Cheyanne Rolf, at the Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. (512-328-0884, x115 or at crolf@gibsonconsult.com). Should you have programmatic questions, please contact Chris Caesar at the TEA (512- 463-9535) or at chris.caesar@tea.state.tx.us.

Campus Information

1. District Name:
Dropdown list of districts (Radio Button)
2. Campus Name:
Dropdown list of campuses (Radio Button)
3. Name of Grant Coordinator/Grant Contact: _____
4. Phone Number of Grant Coordinator/Grant Contact: _____
5. Email address of Grant Coordinator/Grant Contact: _____

6. If person completing this form is different from the Grant Contact listed in Question 3, Indicate name here: _____
7. Phone number of person completing report (if different from number reported in Question 4):

8. Email address of person completing report (if different from email address listed in Question 5):

Overall TNGTI Program Planning

9. How many meetings were held between high school (or 9th grade school) and feeder middle school staff to plan the TNGTI program (Response options: 0, 1-2, 3-4, 5 or more)
10. In what ways did high school and middle school personnel work together to plan the TNGTI program? (Select all that apply)
- Conducted in-person planning meetings
 - Exchanged emails about planning the program
 - Conducted conference calls to plan the program
 - Collaborated on writing the grant proposal
 - Discussed strategies for determining program participants
 - Discussed strategies for recruiting and enrolling students in the summer program
 - Worked collaboratively on the goals and timelines for the program
 - High school and middle school personnel did not work together to plan the TNGTI program
 - Other (please describe) _____

11-12. How many of the following high school and middle school staff members participated in program planning and implementation activities? (Enter “0” if no staff from a particular category were involved)

Staff	Number of High School Staff	Number of Middle School Staff
Principal		
Assistant Principal		
Core subject teachers		
Elective teachers		
Counselors		
Interventionists (including at-risk specialist)		
Grant coordinators		
Other		

13. What strategies were used to identify which incoming 9th grade students were targeted for the TNGTI program and invited to attend the summer transition program? (Select all that apply):

- Collaboration with middle school teachers
- Collaboration with middle school principal/assistant principal
- Collaboration with middle school counselors
- Analysis of student data (achievement, demographic, attendance, behavioral, etc.)
- Parents signed students up
- The program was advertised and interested students signed up
- Other (please specify) _____

14. If student data were analyzed to identify students for the program, what specific indicators were used? (Select all that apply):

- Identified as at risk to not graduate from high school in 4 years
- Excessive number of unexcused absences in 8th grade
- Excessive number of tardies in 8th grade
- Behavioral/disciplinary issues in 8th grade
- 8th grade core course grades
- 8th grade TAKS test results
- 8th grade benchmark test results
- Demographic data not related to school performance (e.g., free-reduced lunch status, retained in grade in prior year, etc.)
- None; student data were not analyzed to identify students for the program
- Other (please specify) _____

Summer Transition Program

15. What was the start date of the summer portion of your TNGTI program? (DD/MM/YYYY)

16. What was the end date of the summer portion of your TNGTI program? (DD/MM/YYYY)

17. Was the summer portion of your TNGTI program conducted in coordination with another program at the campus or district (such as Communities in Schools, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, credit recovery programs, tutoring programs, etc.)?

- Yes (Go to Question 18)
- No (Go to Question 19)

18. Which programs were coordinated with the summer portion of your TNGTI program, and how were they coordinated? (text box)

Indicate which of the following parent outreach activities your campus offered to families of TNGTI students, and provide the frequency with which these opportunities were offered:

19. How frequently was the activity offered? (Select one option)

	Activity was not offered	Once during the summer program	Once per week	Several times per week	Daily
Parent classes/workshops/ seminars	1	2	3	4	5
Parent shadow a student	1	2	3	4	5
Parent informational session on school's policies/student expectations	1	2	3	4	5
Parent/student counseling sessions	1	2	3	4	5
Information sessions on high school graduation/college attendance	1	2	3	4	5
Parent conferences	1	2	3	4	5

20. Approximately what percentage of the students participating in the summer transition program had at least one parent attend/participate in program activities?

- 0-20%
- 21-40%
- 41-60%
- 61-80%
- 81-100%

Summer Transition Activities

21. Which of these activities were offered? (Select one option)

	Offered	Not Offered
Academic instruction in core subjects	1	0
College site visits	1	0
Leadership training	1	0
Planning for high school and graduation	1	0
Orientation activities to familiarize students with high school facilities, lockers, bell schedules, room locations, etc.	1	0
Peer relationship building (e.g., team building, mentorship with older students)	1	0
Educational or career-related field trips	1	0
Community service activities	1	0
Behavioral or social counseling	1	0
Parent involvement activities (e.g., parent shadowing, parent conferences, planning meetings)	1	0
Academic instruction in elective courses	1	0
Tutorials, remediation, accelerated instruction, or credit recovery opportunities	1	0
Opportunities to earn course credit	1	0
Training in study skills (e.g., note taking, time management)	1	0
Training in behavioral skills (e.g., conflict resolution, team building, anger management)	1	0

22. Which were a MAJOR FOCUS of your summer program? (Select all that apply)
23. Which were MOST EFFECTIVE at preparing students for 9th grade? (Select all that apply)
24. Which were LEAST EFFECTIVE at preparing students for 9th grade? (Select all that apply)

	Major Focus	Most Effective	Least Effective
Academic instruction in core subjects			
College site visits			
Leadership training			
Planning for high school and graduation			
Orientation activities to familiarize students with high school facilities, lockers, bell schedules, room locations, etc.			
Peer relationship building (e.g., team building, mentorship with older students)			
Educational or career-related field trips			
Community service activities			
Behavioral or social counseling			
Parent involvement activities (e.g., parent shadowing, parent conferences, planning meetings)			
Academic instruction in elective courses			
Tutorials, remediation, accelerated instruction, or credit recovery opportunities			
Opportunities to earn course credit			
Training in study skills (e.g., note taking, time management)			
Training in behavioral skills (e.g., conflict resolution, team building, anger management)			

25. Prior to the TNGTI summer program in 2009, was there a transition program available for incoming 9th grade students at your school?
- Yes (Go to Question 26)
 - No (Go to Question 27)
26. In what ways is the TNGTI program different from prior programs? (Select all that apply):
- More activities were offered
 - New activities were offered
 - Transportation was provided for students (and was not before)
 - There was a stronger parental component
 - Students were identified for participation in a more targeted way
 - Program was longer in duration
 - Site visits and educational field trips were available (but were not before)
 - Staff professional development was included (and was not before)
 - Nothing was new
 - Other (please specify) _____

Indicate how important each item was to the success of the Summer Transition Program if the activity occurred at your campus. If it did not, select "Activity did not occur."

27. How important were the following items to the success of the Summer Transition Program?

	Activity did not occur	Not important	Minimally important	Moderately important	Very important
Stakeholders from high school and middle school were represented in planning meetings	1	2	3	4	5
Transportation to and from program activities was made available to students who needed it	1	2	3	4	5
Students were provided with intensive instruction in core academic areas (e.g., ELA, Math, Science)	1	2	3	4	5
Materials and supplies arrived on time	1	2	3	4	5
Materials and supplies were sufficient for planned activities	1	2	3	4	5
Adequate teaching and support staff were available for the summer sessions	1	2	3	4	5
Facilities (e.g., classrooms, auditorium, meeting space, etc.) were appropriate for summer activities	1	2	3	4	5
The summer program ran for at least 10 consecutive business days	1	2	3	4	5
Students were provided with strategies to increase resilience and persistence at the high school level through the development of social and academic strategies	1	2	3	4	5
Over three quarters of the students identified for the program were enrolled and attended the program	1	2	3	4	5
Information and/or training was provided to <u>students</u> on the transition to high school	1	2	3	4	5
Information and/or training was provided to <u>parents</u> on the transition to high school	1	2	3	4	5
Information and/or training was provided to <u>students</u> on planning for success in high school and beyond	1	2	3	4	5
Information and/or training was provided to <u>parents</u> on planning for success in high school and beyond	1	2	3	4	5
Students were provided an opportunity to get to know high school teachers and administrators	1	2	3	4	5
Students learned to navigate the high school campus	1	2	3	4	5
Students met peers from other feeder middle school campuses	1	2	3	4	5
Students interacted with upperclassmen from the high school	1	2	3	4	5

Early Warning Data System

28. To what extent did the High School/Middle School planning and implementation committee discuss how the students enrolled in the summer transition program would be monitored throughout the year using the early warning data system?
- Not at all
 - Very little
 - Some
 - Very much
29. To what extent has school administration discussed with teachers or other involved staff how the students enrolled in the summer transition program would be monitored throughout the year using the early warning data system?
- Not at all
 - Very little
 - Some
 - Very much
30. Did your campus make any changes to the measures for academic performance, student behavior, and attendance that will be used to determine the need for student intervention services, since submitting the grant application?
- Yes (Go to Question 31-33)
 - No (Go to Question 34)

If Yes, what are the new measures?

31. Academic: _____

32. Student behavior: _____

33. Attendance: _____

34. Are students participating in the TNGTI program going to be monitored for intervention services differently than other ninth-grade students not participating in the TNGTI program?
- Yes (Go to Question 35)
 - No (Go to Question 36)

35. If Yes, how will TNGTI program participants be monitored differently than other 9th grade students?
(text box)

36. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Select one option)

Early Warning Data System	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ninth grade early warning data system is ready for use at the campus for the fall 2009 semester	1	2	3	4
The planning team reviewed relevant research to determine appropriate indicators and measures for the system	1	2	3	4
Involved staff are aware of what the measures are for identifying students for interventions through the early warning data system	1	2	3	4
There is a clear understanding of how the measures will be used to determine if a student is in need of intervention services	1	2	3	4
The indicators and measures chosen for the early warning data system are based on current research	1	2	3	4
Involved school staff have been adequately trained in the use of the early warning data system	1	2	3	4
Specific staff have been assigned to monitor or coordinate the monitoring of students participating in the TNGTI Program	1	2	3	4

37. How many individuals in each of the positions listed below have explicit responsibility for monitoring students through the early warning data system (enter "0" if no one in that position is responsible for monitoring students):

Staff	Number of High School Staff
Assistant Principal	
Department Chair/Team lead	
Core subject teachers	
Elective teachers	
Counselors	
Interventionists (including at-risk specialist)	
Grant coordinators	
Other, please specify _____	

38. How frequently will the early warning data system be monitored to determine students in need of intervention? (Response options: Daily, weekly, monthly, every 6 week grading period, every 3 week progress reporting period, other (please specify))

Intervention Services

39. Are any of the intervention services planned for the fall and spring semesters different from those typically available to students who need assistance?
- Yes (Go to Question 40)
 - No (Go to Question 41)

40. If Yes, how are intervention services planned for the fall and spring semesters different from those typically available to students who need assistance? (text box)

41. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements related to intervention services planned for fall and spring: (Select one option)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A clear method for delivering intervention services to participating students has been established	1	2	3	4
A clear method for determining if intervention services provided to participating students are achieving desired outcomes has been established	1	2	3	4
Staff have been assigned to deliver intervention services	1	2	3	4
Staff have been trained in the delivery of intervention services	1	2	3	4
A process is in place to appropriately inform students and parents of identification through the early warning data system and the interventions determined appropriate for the student	1	2	3	4

Overall Feedback

42. What barriers, if any, have you encountered to effectively implementing the TNGTI program? (text box)

43. Have there been any particular facilitators to effective implementation of the TNGTI program? (text box)

44. Based on your experience with the TNGTI program so far, how likely is it that the campus will run a similar program next summer?

- Very Likely
- Likely
- Unlikely
- Very Unlikely
- Don't Know/Not Sure

45. To what degree to you feel the program needs to be modified for future years?

- No modifications are needed
- Minor tweaks are needed
- Some modifications are necessary
- Major modifications are necessary
- Other (please specify) _____

46. What suggestions would you make for how this program could be modified or changed? (text box)

Appendix B

For the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program, every participating high school campus was required to provide data on students participating in the program through several student data collections throughout the year. The first student upload data request focused on how students were identified for the program and their levels of participation. The instructions for the first student instructions were disseminated electronically to all TNGTI campuses in September 2009, and this information along with a list of all student variables are presented below.

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Program Student Upload #1 Instructions

General Instructions

TEA is collecting a student upload for your Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) program. The student upload is an excel file that will prompt you for information on each student **recruited** for the summer transition program, and further information for those recruited students who **participated** in the program.

The deadline for submitting the upload through TEA's Encrypted Email System is **September 15, 2009**.

Specific Instructions

In the excel worksheet, please provide the requested information for each student (across campuses) who was **recruited** (i.e., identified, invited, or recommended to participate) in your summer transition program. When entering data, please do not:

- 1) change the format for any field
- 2) copy and paste information into a cell
- 3) skip rows or hide columns
- 4) insert any additional columns

Data field	Specific instructions for recruited students
8th Grade CDC Number	Enter the nine-digit county-district-campus (CDC) number for the school the student attended in the 8th Grade. Please <u>do not</u> include dashes.
8th Grade Campus Name	Enter the full campus name the student attended in the 8th Grade. Spell out all abbreviations and acronyms.
8th Grade District Name	Enter the full district or organization name of the campus the student attended in the 8th Grade. Spell out all abbreviations and acronyms.
9th Grade CDC Number	Enter the nine-digit county-district-campus (CDC) number for the school the student will attend in the 9th Grade. Please <u>do not</u> include dashes.
9th Grade Campus Name	Enter the full campus or organization name the student will attend in the 9th Grade. Spell out all abbreviations and acronyms.
9th Grade District Name	Enter the full district or organization name of the campus the student will attend in the 9th Grade. Spell out all abbreviations and acronyms.

Student (State) ID	Enter the student's state ID number (no dashes), which is either the student's social security number (SSN) or state assigned number (S Number; e.g., "s123456789").
Student First Name	Enter the student's first name as listed in PEIMS (if applicable; e.g., If student's name is "Barb" but in PEIMS it is listed as "Barbara," please type "Barbara" for student's first name in this column).
Student Last Name	Enter the student's last name as listed in PEIMS.
Student Birth Date	Enter the student's birth date using this format: MM/DD/YYYY.
Reason Identified	From the dropdown list, please select the reason why the student was identified or recruited for the program. If there is more than one reason, please select the reason that fits best.
Days Attended	Please select the number of days the student attended the summer program for at least two hours. If the student did not attend the program, please select "Did not attend," as the response option in the dropdown list.

Please provide the additional requested information for each student (across campuses) who was not only recruited in your summer transition program, but also **participated** in the program (i.e., attended at least one day for two hours).

Data field	Specific instructions for participated students
Program Length	Please indicate the length of the summer program by total number of days
Math Sessions	Please indicate if the student attended academic sessions in math
Reading Sessions	Please indicate if the student attended academic sessions in reading
Science Sessions	Please indicate if the student attended academic sessions in science
Counselor Sessions	Please indicate if the student attended sessions with a school counselor
Parent Activities	Please indicate if the student's parent/guardian attended parental program activities
Outside Speaker	Please indicate if the student attended sessions conducted by an outside presenter, such as a motivational speaker
College Trips	Please indicate if the student attended college field trips
Other Trips	Please indicate if the student attended other educational field trips
Social Skills	Please indicate if the student participated in social/behavioral skills training

If you have any questions related to this form, please contact John Kucsera at ProgramEval@tea.state.tx.us. Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix C

To provide a richer picture of the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program, face-to-face interviews were conducted to learn about the firsthand experiences of participating program staff. Interviews occurred with middle school staff (administrators, counselors, teachers) and high school staff (administrators, grant coordinators, coaches, interventionists, counselors, teachers) who were involved in planning and implementing the TNGTI grant program, specifically focusing on the summer transition program. The campus interviews took place at selected TNGTI schools in August and September 2009, and all interview questions are included below.

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Program Summer 2009 Interview Protocol—Campus Staff

Hello, I'm _____ from Gibson Consulting Group/Learning Point Associates. We are an organization that conducts educational research and evaluation. We have been selected by Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention grant program. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on how the program is being implemented in different schools and districts.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The interview should take approximately 45 minutes. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, to develop an implementation survey instrument, and to give us a sense of what these programs look like on the ground. I just want to note that in our reporting of findings, you will not be identified by name or position. Interview data will be reported in the aggregate, as we are looking for common themes across districts.

I will be taking notes as we talk and would also like to tape-record our conversation to ensure accuracy. May I have your permission to tape this conversation?

Respondent permission given for taping: Yes : No

Respondent Information

1. What is your current position?

1a. How long have you worked in this position?

2. What is your role in your school's Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention program?

2a. What role (if any) did you play in the planning, organization, or implementation of the summer transition program at your school?

Purpose

3. What are the goals of the summer transition program at your school?

Program Activities

4. What types of academic activities and curriculum are students participating in during the summer program?

4a. What subject matter from core academic areas is being covered in the summer transition program? (e.g., Reading/Writing/ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies topics)

5. What types of social and behavioral activities are students participating in during the summer program?

6. How are students becoming involved in planning activities to help them transition to high school and plan for success beyond graduation?

7. How does your summer program involve parents of participating students? (e.g., providing information and training on the transition to high school, tools to help their child plan for success in high school)

Student Participation

8. How were students selected for the summer transition program?

8a. What recruiting methods or strategies were used to encourage students to sign up for the summer transition program?

9. Approximately what proportion of the students who were identified for the program are participating?

9a. What are some of the reasons why some students are not participating?

Planning

10. Who has been involved in planning the summer transition program? (Probe for involvement of high school teachers, middle school teachers and other staff)

11. Describe the ways in which high school and middle school personnel worked together to plan the Summer Transition Program(s). Probe for specific planning activities (e.g., collaborated on writing the grant proposal; discussed strategies for determining program participants; discussed strategies for recruiting and enrolling students in the summer program).

11a. How often did middle school and high school staff meet to plan the summer transition program? How often did they communicate by e-mail or conference call?

District Support

12. What types of support have you received from the district office in the development and implementation of the summer transition program?

13. How does this summer transition program differ from any type of summer transition program your district or school has offered in the past?

Program Implementation

14. To what extent have program activities been implemented as planned?

14a. Which activities were not implemented as planned? What issues prevented these activities from being implemented as planned? Were any of these issues overcome and if so, how?

15. What instructional strategies are program staff using to promote participation and interest in high school success for students?

15a. What specific training have you received, if any, on how to implement the strategies and activities for this program? Who provided this training? (e.g., the state, district, school)

15b. *If interviewing the principal or program coordinator ask:* What specific training have teachers/staff received, if any, on how to implement the strategies and activities for this program? Who provided this training? (e.g., the state, district, school)

Program Impact

16. In what ways have your students benefited from this program, if at all?

16a. In what ways have teachers or other school staff (i.e., counselors, administrators) benefited from this program, if at all?

17. Can you provide some examples of active student engagement and participation in the program? (*Probe:* attendance, interest level, asking questions)

18. Which activities or combinations of activities did you find to have the greatest immediate impact on students participating in the summer session?

Influencing Factors

19. What are some of the positive factors that have facilitated the implementation of the summer transition program?

20. Describe any barriers to program implementation that you have encountered (e.g., aspects of the program that have not gone as smoothly as planned). How are those barriers being addressed?

Sustainability

21. Would you like for your school to be involved in the summer transition program next year? Why or why not?

22. What modifications, if any, do think need to be made to the Summer Transition Program in future years?

Appendix D

For the program evaluation, researchers were interested in how different districts implemented the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program on their participating campuses. Face-to-face interviews occurred with district level staff (superintendents, assistant superintendents, grant coordinators) who were involved in planning and monitoring the TNGTI grant, specifically focusing on the summer transition program. The district interviews took place at selected TNGTI districts in August and September 2009, and all interview questions are included below.

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Program Summer 2009 Interview Protocol—District Staff

Hello, I'm _____ from Gibson Consulting Group/Learning Point Associates. We are an organization that conducts educational research and evaluation. We have been selected by Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention grant program. The purpose of this interview is to obtain information on how the program is being implemented in different schools and districts.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. The interview should take approximately 30-40 minutes. Your responses will be used to help inform the evaluation, to develop an implementation survey instrument, and to give us a sense of what these programs look like on the ground. I just want to note that in our reporting of findings, you will not be identified by name or position. Interview data will be reported in the aggregate, as we are looking for common themes across districts.

I will be taking notes as we talk and would also like to tape-record our conversation to ensure accuracy. May I have your permission to tape this conversation?

Respondent permission given for taping: Yes : No

Respondent Information

1. What is your current position?

1a. How long have you worked in this position?

2. What is your role in your districts' Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention program(s)?

Purpose

3. Please explain why your district decided to apply for the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention grant.

3a. How would you describe the overall purpose of your Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention program(s)?

4. Can you talk a little bit about the overall dropout and ninth grade retention rates in your district, and other contextual factors that are unique to the high schools in your district?

4a. How do you see this grant supporting your efforts to address these issues?

Selection

5. Beyond the grant's campus eligibility requirements how did you determine which campuses would participate in the program? (i.e., campuses have to serve at least 50% at-risk students to participate)

5a. Were all eligible campuses included, or was there a process by which some campuses were considered for inclusion and others were not? Can you explain this process?

Planning

6. In what ways was the district involved in helping schools develop their Ninth Grade Transition Programs, if at all?

6a. Was the district involved in development of the Summer Transition Program, selection of the early warning data system, or determination of intervention strategies? If so, how?

7. How did you decide on the timing of the Summer Transition Program(s) in your district? Probe for factors that contributed to the decision to hold either earlier or later in the summer (*Note: Several districts held programs in June, others are holding them in July or August*)

**If more than one high school from the district is participating, ask question 8:*

8. Some districts have chosen to use a similar program approach across all participating high schools, while other districts are creating individual programs at each participating campus. How has your district handled program design at multiple campuses?

8a. How did these high schools collaborate in planning for the Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program? (*Probe: Student identification and recruiting for program, Summer Transition Program, early warning data system indicators and measures, Interventions*)

8b. How did you determine the amount of funding that each campus would receive through the grant?

District Support

9. Is the district providing any oversight for program implementation?

9a. *If Yes*, please explain what areas the district is monitoring (e.g., Summer Transition Program sessions, early warning data system selection and implementation, interventions and student outcomes)

9b. Who is providing oversight at the district level?

10. What types of direct or indirect support, if any, is the district providing to schools that are implementing the Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention grant? (e.g., materials, transportation, teacher training)

District Initiatives

11. How does the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention grant program align with other current district initiatives?

11a. Has there been any effort to coordinate this program with other initiatives?

12. Has the district implemented any transition programs for ninth-grade students in the past?

12a. *If Yes*, how does the current transition program differ from previous programs?

Program Impact and Influencing Factors

13. Does the district have a process for assessing the impact of the program on students at participating campuses?

14. In your opinion, what is going well with this program in your district so far?

15. Describe any barriers to program implementation your district has encountered (e.g., aspects of the program that have not gone as smoothly as planned). How are those barriers being addressed?

16. What positive factors have aided the district in the implementation of this program?

Sustainability

17. Do you think the Summer Transition Program is a good value in terms of cost and expected benefits? Why or why not?

18. Do you think your district will offer Summer Transition Programs next year? Why or why not?

19. What modifications, if any, do think need to be made to the Summer Transition Program in future years?

Additional Comments

20. Do you have anything else you would like to add about the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention grant program?

Appendix E

Site visit observations of the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) program summer transition activities occurred at selected campuses in August 2009. Observation segments ranged from 10 to 15 minutes in length, and a range of activities were observed on participating campuses. The full observation protocol is presented below, as well as a list of activities that might possibly be observed that was provided to site visitors as a guide.

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Program Summer 2009 Site Visit Observation Protocol

Date: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____

District name: _____

Campus name: _____

Name of summer transition program session observed: _____

Number of student participants: _____ Number of program staff: _____

Program staff from: middle school / high school / other _____ (Circle all that apply)

A. Observed activities focused on the reinforcement and/or acceleration of core academic knowledge and skills? (Provide details)

B. Observed activities focused on academic and social strategies to support resilience and persistence at the high school level? (Provide details)

C. Observed activities focused on the transition to high school and planning for success in high school and beyond? (Provide details)

D. Observed other student activities (e.g. field trip, recreation)? (Provide details)

--

E. Observed activities involving parents/guardians or community members? (Provide details)

--

F. Overall student engagement and participation in activities: (Choose one and provide details)

<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

G. Overall student behavior and classroom management: (Choose one and provide details, including how misbehavior was managed, if applicable)

<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

H. Overall organization and flow of program activities: (Choose one and provide details)

<input type="checkbox"/> High	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> Low

Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) Program Site Visit Observation Protocol Codes

For each observation, identify the focus area of the observed activities and provide details of the specific activities/content occurring during the program session (see example activities in A-E below). Where relevant, also provide details on the following:

- Instructional approach (e.g., lecture, small group discussion, individual seat work)
- Student behavior, including reactions to the content or examples presented
- Parent behavior, including reactions to the content or examples presented, when applicable

A. Example activities focused on the reinforcement and/or acceleration of core academic knowledge and skills

- Teaching of basic skills related to English Language Arts, mathematics, social studies, or science
- Reviewing eighth grade content knowledge needed for high school
- Looking through example ninth grade tests, assignments and homework
- Examining ninth grade textbooks and classroom materials
- Other activities directly related to content knowledge

B. Example activities focused on academic and social strategies to support resilience and persistence at the high school level

- Discussing time management and work habits
- Organizing assignments and homework
- Discussing study skills and note taking
- Learning about peer relations at high school
- High school students present information about available social activities
- Student-to-student mentoring with students from high school
- Middle school students shadowing high school students
- Meeting with counselors to talk about coping with stress
- Emphasizing adult standards of behavior for high school

C. Example activities focused on the transition to high school and planning for success in high school and beyond

- Orientation to high school facilities, building tour and school map
- Knowledge of safety and discipline from the high school student handbook
- Review of high school bell schedule
- Meet high school teachers and have a question and answer session
- Selecting courses, both core classes and electives
- A four-year overview of mandatory classes at high school
- Requirements for high school graduation
- Emphasis on course rigor and making academic choices to support preparation for college
- Career counseling and determining interest level in different jobs
- Extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs

D. Examples of other possible student activities

- Recreational activities or games
- Social activities, such as lunches or dances
- Team sports activities
- Field trip to college visits or other related locations
- Other program activities that do not fall under the previous categories

E. Example activities involving parents/guardians or community members

- Parents/guardians are present at information sessions
- Parents/guardians participating or assisting in activities
- Program staff provide parent/guardian communication for students to take home
- Community members participating or speaking with students (e.g. college professor, pastor)

Provide ratings of student engagement and participation, student behavior and classroom management, and organization and flow of program activities using the guidelines provided in F-H below.

F. Student engagement and participation – Assessment of the level of student involvement and participation in the program activities during the observed session (e.g., actively discussing topics, asking questions, listening to program staff, taking notes).

- High – Almost all students are engaged, on-task, and are actively participating in program activities for the majority of the observed session.
- Medium – Over half of the students are engaged, on-task, and are actively participating for the majority of the observed session *OR* participation is inconsistent (mixed) during the observed session.
- Low – Most students are not engaged, off-task, and/or not actively participating in program activities for the majority of the observed session.

G. Student behavior and classroom management – Assessment of the level of student behavior and teacher classroom management during the observed session (e.g., minimal disruption of activities, interactions show mutual respect, positive communication and praise). Include how misbehavior was managed, if applicable

- High – Almost all teacher/student and student/student interactions demonstrate mutual respect, positive communication, and there is minimal disruption of program activities for the majority of the observed session.
- Medium – Over half of teacher/student and student/student interactions demonstrate mutual respect, positive communication, and there are few disruptions of program activities for the majority of the observed session *OR* classroom management is inconsistent (mixed) during the observed session.
- Low – Most teacher/student and student/student interactions do not demonstrate mutual respect, communication focuses on correcting behavior, and there are major disruptions of program activities during the observed session.

H. Organization and flow of program activities – Assessment of the level of organization of program activities during the observed session (e.g., clearly defined purpose/goals of activities, activities follow a schedule, smooth transitions between activities, effective use of activity time).

- High – Almost all program activities are clearly defined, flow smoothly, and effectively maximize program time for the majority of the observed session.
- Medium – Over half of the program activities are clearly defined, flow smoothly, and effectively maximize program time for the majority of the observed session OR organization is inconsistent (mixed) during the observed session.
- Low – Most program activities do not have a clearly defined purpose, do not flow smoothly, and do not effectively use program time for the majority of the observed session.

Appendix F

Complete List of Summer Transition Program Activities And Success Factors

On the first campus progress report for the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program, participating campuses responded to several questions about their summer transition activities. Information about the types of activities offered, which activities were the major focus of the program, and which were seen as most effective and least effective are presented below. Campuses also indicated how important certain factors were to the success of their summer transition program.

Table F1 presents the percentages of summer activities offered at participating campuses calculated as a percentage of total respondents to the first campus progress report. Respondents also indicated which of these activities were a major focus of their summer transition program; percentages are calculated as a percentage of total respondents to the first campus progress report.

Table F1. Activities and Opportunities Offered During the Summer Transition Program (N = 62)

Summer Transition Activities	Offered		Major focus	
	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
1. Orientation activities to familiarize students with high school facilities	57	91.9%	38	61.3%
2. Academic instruction in core subjects	56	90.3%	47	75.8%
3. Training in study skills	55	88.7%	37	59.7%
4. Planning for high school and graduation	53	85.5%	36	58.1%
5. Peer relationship building	48	77.4%	32	51.6%
6. Training in behavioral skills	44	71.0%	26	41.9%
7. Parent involvement activities	39	62.9%	20	32.3%
8. Educational or career-related field trips	37	59.7%	25	40.3%
9. Leadership training	36	58.1%	18	29.0%
10. Academic instruction in elective courses	36	58.1%	23	37.1%
11. Behavioral or social counseling	32	51.6%	17	27.4%
12. Tutorials, remediation, accelerated instruction, or credit recovery opportunities	31	50.0%	18	29.0%
13. College site visits	27	43.5%	17	27.4%
14. Opportunities to earn course credits	19	30.6%	17	27.4%
15. Community service activities	14	22.6%	4	6.5%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Table F2 presents the percentages of the summer activities considered to be most effective and least effective calculated as a percentage of reported activities offered. For example, of the 57 campuses that offered orientation activities, 36 campuses considered it to be one of the most effective activities (63%), and 3 campuses considered it to be one of the least effective activities (5%).

Table F2. Effectiveness of Activities and Opportunities Offered During the Summer Transition Program

Summer Transition Activities	Most effective		Least effective	
	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses	Number of Campuses	Percentage of Campuses
1. Training in study skills (e.g., note taking, time management)	35	63.6%	3	5.5%
2. Orientation activities to familiarize students with high school facilities (e.g., lockers, schedules, rooms, etc.)	36	63.2%	3	5.3%
3. Peer relationship building (e.g., team building, mentorship with older students)	29	60.4%	3	6.3%
4. Opportunities to earn course credits	11	57.9%	0	0.0%
5. Training in behavioral skills (e.g., conflict resolution, anger management)	25	56.8%	1	2.3%
6. Behavioral or social counseling	17	53.1%	1	3.1%
7. Academic instruction in core subjects	29	51.8%	1	1.8%
8. Tutorials, remediation, accelerated instruction, or credit recovery opportunities	16	51.6%	1	3.2%
9. Leadership training	18	50.0%	2	5.6%
10. Planning for high school and graduation	24	45.3%	0	0.0%
11. Parent involvement activities (e.g., parent shadowing, parent conferences, planning meetings)	17	43.6%	9	23.1%
12. Educational or career-related field trips	16	43.2%	7	18.9%
13. Academic instruction in elective courses	15	41.7%	4	11.1%
14. College site visits	10	37.0%	5	18.5%
15. Community service activities	5	35.7%	4	28.6%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Note: Respondents were asked to “Check all that apply.” Percentages therefore do not sum to 100%.

Table F3 presents a list of 17 possible factors that could have contributed to the success of the summer transition program at participating campuses. Respondents indicated how important each factor was to their individual campus, ranging from “not important” to “very important.” If this factor was not present during the summer transition program, respondents selected the option “did not occur.” Percentage is calculated as a percentage of total respondents to the first campus progress report.

Table F3. Factors Important to the Success of the Summer Transition Program (N = 62)

Success Factors	Did not occur	Not important	Minimally important	Moderately important	Very important
Adequate teaching and support staff available for the summer sessions	6.5%	0.0%	1.6%	8.0%	83.9%
Information/training was provided to <u>students</u> on transition to high school	6.5%	0.0%	1.6%	12.9%	79.0%
Facilities (e.g., classrooms) were appropriate for summer activities	6.5%	0.0%	4.8%	11.3%	77.4%
Students had an opportunity to meet high school teachers/administrators	6.5%	0.0%	4.8%	11.3%	77.4%
Students provided with strategies to increase resilience/persistence through social and academic strategies	9.7%	0.0%	1.6%	12.9%	75.8%
Materials and supplies sufficient for planned activities	8.1%	3.2%	3.2%	12.9%	72.6%
Students learned to navigate the high school campus	6.5%	1.6%	4.8%	19.4%	67.7%
Students provided with intensive instruction in core academic areas	11.3%	1.6%	4.8%	16.2%	66.1%
Materials and supplies arrived on time	11.3%	1.6%	6.5%	14.5%	66.1%
The summer program ran for at least 10 consecutive business days	11.3%	3.2%	8.1%	12.9%	64.5%
Information/training provided to <u>students</u> on planning for success in high school and beyond	9.7%	0.0%	3.2%	25.8%	61.3%
Transportation to and from program activities was made available to students who needed it	30.6%	3.2%	6.5%	9.7%	50.0%
Students met peers from other feeder middle school campuses	30.6%	3.2%	6.5%	12.9%	46.8%
Over three quarters of the students identified for the program were enrolled and attended the program	29.0%	3.2%	6.5%	19.4%	41.9%
Information/training provided to <u>parents</u> on the transition to high school	24.2%	0.0%	9.7%	27.4%	38.7%
Information/training provided to <u>parents</u> on planning for success in high school and beyond	27.4%	1.6%	6.5%	27.4%	37.1%
Students interacted with upperclassmen from the high school	30.6%	4.8%	12.9%	16.2%	35.5%

Source: The Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention Program First Campus Progress Report (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Appendix G

Complete List of Suggested Program Modifications

For the Texas Ninth Grade Transition and Intervention (TNGTI) grant program, every participating high school campus was required to complete a campus progress report for TEA. As part of the first campus progress report, respondents were asked an open-ended question related to what suggestions they had for how the TNGTI program could be modified or changed. All written responses to this question are presented below. Please note, some campuses offered multiple suggestions for program modifications.

Table G1. Open-Ended Suggestions for Changes to the TNGTI Program

Suggestions
1. More time between NOGA and implementation.
2. Provide for time for early warning data system software to be implemented by the beginning of school.
3. We would like for it to include more students. Up to 500, but that would make it harder to monitor them.
4. We would be interested in hearing about how other programs are going and what interventions are working for them. I think that we all could run more effective programs with a shorter learning curve if we shared information. We would also like to hear about any programs that had a large number of at-risk students attending their summer program and to what they attribute that success.
5. We could work on the start time so that it worked better with the regular summer school program that we hold on our campus.
6. We need to do something differently in order to get greater parent participation.
7. Earlier coordination with central office and feeder middle schools. We felt good about the program and look forward to increasing participation next summer.
8. For the planning phase of the Summer Transition Program, we need clarification on the extent of involvement and commitment expected from staff at the Middle school level and at High School level.
9. To avoid scheduling conflicts with other summer school programs, please allow some flexibility on the begin date for the Summer Transition Program. (i.e. to operate the program when Summer School is not in session).
10. Award notification needs to be earlier to allow program to be put together before staff leaves for summer.
11. Allow program to be conducted on Saturdays during fall semester to bolster 9th grade students who are at risk. Most of our targeted students had to go to summer school and a remediation academy in order to move to 9th grade. Parents do not want to commit to 3 more weeks of summer school for many of these students.
12. I understand that funding is tight, but an increase in funds would definitely allow the campus to continue with the program and it would have a direct impact on our at-risk population encouraging them to continue with their education.
13. Daily transportation should be allowed in the budget.
14. Allow for students to be able to take or be enrolled in more Career and Technical Education courses.

Suggestions

15. As a coordinator I found it a challenging to work in the summer because of the obligations that the students need to fulfill at their middle schools in the early summer. However if the program would have been held in late summer, we probably would not have been able to have much participation from the teachers because of family vacations, etc. As far as the at-risk kids, if they were spending the first half of the summer at their middle school I believe it was going to be hard to take the second half of their summer for more "summer school." After we noticed the problems, the staff and I were able to tweak it so that the kids could go to their middle schools in the morning and the high school in the afternoon. Next time we will know how to start that process earlier.
16. Amending the grant in order to provide funding for a program coordinator who is a professional other than the grant coordinator. The campus grant coordinator would monitor and make sure activities were implemented.
17. Please add transportation to the grant.
18. This program could be modified to serve more students and provide additional funding for more field experiences and academic activities.
19. More innovative ways to attract 8th grade students to the program.
20. Provide adequate planning time. Involve school personnel in developing grant application.
21. Place policies in regards to specific student participation, enrollment deadlines, and specific areas to regain credits.
22. Implement a test run of the program or make it a pilot program before actually making it and its content mandatory.
23. Keep an open mind for room for improvement and keep in mind that not all schools will be in the same place at the same time.
24. Modify the programs' requested information since Chancery does not comply with the program; allow schools to use Chancery printed reports rather than manually inputting all information.
25. Allow schools more time to implement the program and make modifications as needed since this is a first year program.
26. Time lines (We are a year round district).
27. I think that the program can offer a better variety of classes and activities, possible credit.
28. Contact middle schools before the end of the first semester to reintroduce the programs. Meet with team leaders at the middle schools shortly after TAKS administration and work with counselors during the last six weeks for recommendations of student participants.
29. Suggest more money for field trips to colleges, money for counselor specific for the 9th grade initiative. Believe this was the beginning of a very good program. We expect to be able to do more next year and with additional funding possibly may be able to have more counselors, more teachers, and attend more field trips to colleges.
30. Possibly alter the time to hold the transition program - not summer, since most of the identified kids are attending summer school in the middle school.
31. Maybe it can serve different student populations.
32. Selection/ Recruitment process at the middle schools needs to be coordinated better.
33. Involvement of the parents in the planning process of the program - two or three parents at least from each middle school.
34. More effective Parent Orientation in recruitment and at the start and additional conferences in the summer during the program and in the fall and spring.

Suggestions

35. Students will see the whole four years of high school laid out before them in the program including the courses required, career and college preparation tracks in high school. In addition students will have opportunities to be exposed through current high school students the various organizations, clubs, programs and sports available for student participation in high school.
36. The majority of the students targeted also attend summer school, so some adjustment to time needs to be considered.
37. More opportunities for parental involvement.
38. Create more flexible timelines.
39. Require middle school counselors and administrators to actively identify potential students.
40. We would like to see the TNGTI have more weeks.
41. More funding for advertising and school collaboration before summer begins (in May).
42. Establishing a list of students in need earlier in the year will help in the efficiency of the summer enrollment and reach out to the students who might otherwise opt out and not participate at all.
43. Planning summer school and the TNGTI summer camp at different times would allow for students that have to attend summer school to also attend the TNGTI summer camp. There were several students this summer that were not able to attend, because of grade recovery.
44. More advance notice of budgets and timelines so that orders could be placed and curriculum could be more planned out ahead of time. There are so many great things that we would have like to have done but did not have the district mandated time ahead for ordering.
45. As a modification, first week of school for a recruitment alternative could be moved to second or third week after rules and policies have put into place on school campus.
46. Secondly, grant awards to be granted early spring instead of three week before school ends.
47. Create an early warning system that is compatible with Chancery.
48. Provide more funding for incentives, marketing, mailings, etc. Participation has been challenging. We have ample staff eager to work with students. We just need help getting the students here.
49. There needs to be more communication between middle schools and high school personnel to recruit students and make sure that students' information is accurate to facilitate program implementation. For example, testing information and at-risk indicators need to be current.
50. Grant monies should be in place before the summer session begins.
51. Be flexible with the summer transition program requirements in terms of days to implement. I think there might be value in bringing the groups together in the fall and in the spring and limiting the days of the actual summer session.
52. I am thinking of a summer transition retreat in which all incoming 9th graders can participate. I would like to offer a week's worth of intensive high school training. About 700 incoming freshmen enter our high school every year. If we could service all of them and train them effectively on high school survival skills, we might just win the war against drop-outs. Quality over quantity is what we aim for!
53. Allow the campuses to provide incentives to participate in the summer program. It is very hard to get students to give up their summer vacation days to voluntarily attend a summer program.
54. Allow funding for tutorial incentives so students will participate after school and on Saturdays.
55. I feel that the program should be geared toward incoming 9th graders as well as repeat 9th graders.
56. I also feel that the program should continue to monitor students throughout their high school years to see if the interventions were effective.