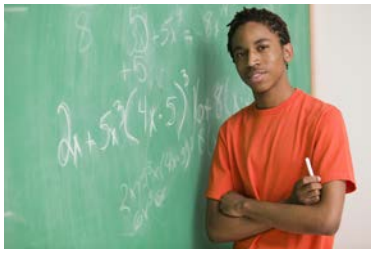

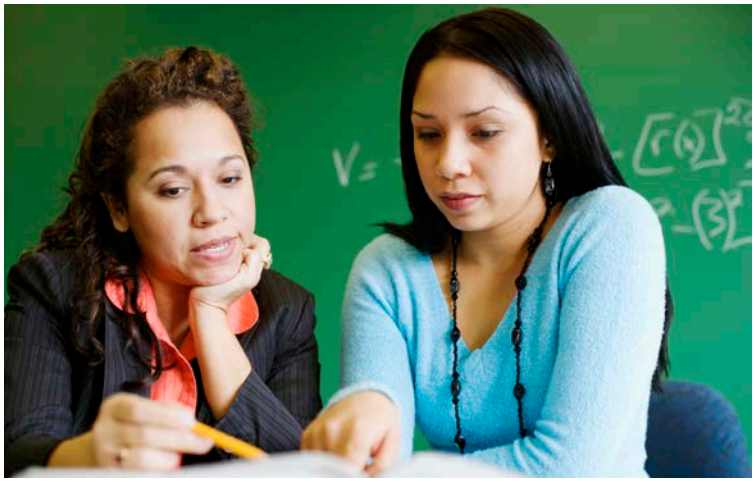

Evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program: A High School Success Pilot Program

February 2011 Report

Submitted to:

Texas Education Agency

ICF INTERNATIONAL

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CREDITS

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Abbreviations Key

ACTN – Antioch Community Transformation Network
AEA – Alternative Education Accountability
AEIS – Academic Excellence Indicator System
ALAS – Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success
CDR – Collaborative Dropout Reduction
CFO – Chief Financial Officer
CIS – Communities In Schools
CISD – Consolidated Independent School District
CTE – Career and Technology Education
DAEP – Disciplinary Alternative Education Program
DART – Dallas Area Rapid Transit
DELTA – Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, and Academics
ELA – English language arts
ELL – English Language Learner
ESL – English as a Second Language
GAA – General Appropriations Act
HB2237 – House Bill 2237
HERC – Higher Education Readiness Component
HGLM – Hierarchical Generalized Linear Modeling
HLM – Hierarchical Linear Modeling
HSSPP – High School Success Pilot Programs
IDRA – Intercultural Development Research Association
IHE – Institution of Higher Education
ISAS – Integrated Statewide Administrative System
ISD – Independent School District
ISP – Intensive Summer Programs
LEA – Local Education Agency
LEP – Limited English Proficient
MIC – Mathematics Instructional Coaches
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
NCES – National Center for Education Statistics
NCLR – National Council for La Raza
NOGA – Notice of Grant Award
PD – Professional Development
PEIMS – Public Education Information Management System
PGP – Personal Graduation Plan
RFA – Request for Applications
SBOE – State Board of Education
SD – Standard Deviation
SSA – Shared Service Agreement
STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math
TAKS – Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills
TEA – Texas Education Agency
TEC – Texas Education Code
THECB – Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
TNGTI – Texas Ninth Grade Transition Program
TSI – Texas Success Initiative
US – United States
VSP – Virtual School Programs

Executive Summary

Highlights:

- Collaborative Dropout Reduction pilot program (CDR) grantees were successful at fostering collaborations with local businesses, local governments, law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education.
- 22 CDR grantees were awarded a total of $6.6 million and served 5,432 students in the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years. Grantees delivered services to students in four areas: workforce skill development, academic support, attendance improvement, and student/family support services.
- Although Cycle 1 CDR schools had lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and higher completion rates relative to their comparison group between the year prior and the end of the first year implementing the program, these results were not statistically significant. Because only 11 CDR schools were part of this analysis, statistically significant school-level results would be difficult to demonstrate.
- CDR students demonstrated strong gains in meeting or exceeding TAKS-Math, TAKS-Reading, and TAKS-Science passing standards. These gains outpaced state averages, and the gains demonstrated by at-risk CDR students in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Science outpaced gains for at-risk students in Texas.
- CDR students who remained in the program for two years had lower TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math proficiency rates after one year in the program, but demonstrated significantly higher rates of proficiency in the second year.

This evaluation report presents findings from the first and second year of the evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction pilot program (CDR), which correspond to the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years. CDR is one of three grant programs grouped together as the High School Success Pilot Programs (HSSPP). The other two programs are the Intensive Summer Programs pilot program (ISP) and the Mathematics Instructional Coaches pilot program (MIC). Collectively, these three grant programs were authorized and funded by the Texas Legislature in 2007[1] so awarded districts could develop and implement projects to prevent and reduce dropout, increase high school success, and improve college and career readiness in public schools.

> ***"[CDR staff member] was my mom because my mom wasn't."***
>
> -CDR Student

The consequences of a student's decision to drop out of school can have serious and negative ramifications for both the individual and society as a whole. Texas has taken a number of steps to reduce the dropout rate, increase both graduation rates and college and career readiness, and involve multiple stakeholders in these efforts. Just as the decision to drop out is influenced by multiple and interrelated personal, demographic, social, and school-based factors, CDR is designed to be multi-faceted and involve cooperation among schools, individuals, and organizations from outside of the traditional school community to provide effective interventions and services to students at risk of dropping out of school.

[1] All three HSSPP programs were authorized by House Bill 2237 (80th Texas Legislature). Specifically, CDR was authorized as Texas Education Code §29.096. All three programs were funded by Rider 53 (General Appropriations Act [GAA], Article III, 80th Texas Legislature); further funded by Rider 51 (GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature). The evaluation is required by Rider 79 (GAA, Article III, 80th Texas Legislature); further required by Rider 69 (GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature). A final report will be due to the Texas Legislature in January 2013, pending further funding.

Program Goals

CDR was designed to provide grantees opportunities to create a new local dropout reduction program or to expand/enhance an existing program.[2] The purpose of CDR is to foster collaborations with local businesses, local governments, law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education to deliver proven, research-based dropout intervention services. Specifically, CDR seeks to increase the number of students graduating from high school through the following:

- Reducing the number of students who drop out of school in the community
- Increasing students' job skills
- Increasing students' employment opportunities
- Providing continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school, including dropout recovery and re-entry programs
- Preparing students to graduate college-ready
- Sustaining dropout reduction and recovery strategies beyond the grant program
- Providing models of effective community-based dropout prevention and recovery efforts to serve as guides in developing future program and policy initiatives in the areas of dropout prevention and serving at-risk students

Program Evaluation

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

- Evaluate the implementation of CDR instructional strategies and programs
- Evaluate the impact of CDR on student outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, dropout, graduation)
- Evaluate the impact of CDR on students' career readiness skills (e.g., ethical workplace behaviors)
- Assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR

The evaluation of CDR began in September 2008. Per Rider 69 (GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature), a final evaluation report is due to the Texas legislature in January 2013, pending further funding. A CDR Interim Report (December 2010) focused primarily on CDR Cycle 1 grantees and their activities during the 2008–09 school year.[3]

This evaluation report is designed to provide a detailed accounting of evaluation findings during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees. Although some outcome data were not available at the time of this writing (e.g., dropout, graduation, and promotion for the 2009–10 school year), the report nonetheless provides a full picture of CDR implementation, and a partial picture of the associated outcomes and cost-effectiveness/sustainability of CDR.

[2] More information about CDR can be found online at TEA's website here.
[3] The December 2010 CDR Interim Report can be found online here.

Grantees

Six CDR grantees were funded in Cycle 1 for implementation on 15 campuses.[4] In addition, there are 16 Cycle 2 grantees that began implementing CDR in 2009–10 on 26 campuses. Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees were required to address four service areas in providing services to students:

- *Workforce skill development*, which included paid employment, internship opportunities, and advanced career and vocational training for participating students
- *Academic support*, which included tutoring programs, credit recovery, academic acceleration, active learning strategies, career and technical education, and software to enhance student learning
- *Attendance improvement*, which included truancy and attendance intervention and incentive programs, school attachment, and positive behavior support
- *Student and family support*, which included addressing the social, emotional, and personal needs of students and their families

CDR Implementation Findings

CDR grantees served 5,432 students in the first two years of the program. Six Cycle 1 grantees served 1,924 students: 414 students were served in the 2008–09 school year only, 969 students entered the program in the 2009–10 school year, and 541 students participated in the CDR program in both school years. Importantly, CDR Cycle 1 grantees had served about 42% more students than they had planned to serve (1,355) by the end of the grant period. The 16 Cycle 2 grantees served 3,508 students during the 2009–10 school year. [5]

CDR is reaching schools with a large population of students at high risk of dropping out. The majority of the student population at the 15 campuses implementing Cycle 1 projects and the 26 campuses implementing Cycle 2 projects was identified as at risk of dropping out (73%) and economically disadvantaged (88%).[6] Compared to statewide averages, most CDR schools had higher mobility and dropout rates, as well as a larger proportion of students enrolled in special education.

> "This is a very good program because it's a second opportunity for students."
>
> -CDR Student

CDR grantees made significant accomplishments and faced a number of challenges in the implementation of their programs. Key facilitators and barriers to program implementation were identified, based on interviews with CDR program staff and partners during site visits. Facilitators to implementation included:

- *Diversity in programming:* Both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees provided a wide range of services and opportunities in recognition of their students' interrelated problems and needs. Programming included not only credit recovery, tutorials for TAKS and academic subjects, and training in workforce skills, but also extracurricular clubs and home visits.

[4] Hurricane Ike made landfall on September 13, 2008 and forced the closure of one CDR grantee's school system for an extended period of time. The grantee was able to implement their CDR program in the spring of 2009, and continued services in the 2009–10 school year. Additional information on Cycle 1 grantees can be found in the 2010 CDR Interim Report, available online here.

[5] All six CDR Cycle 1 grantees were awarded a continuation grant with a grant period from August 2010 to February 2012. CDR Cycle 2 grants end February 2011.

[6] In order to be classified by TEA as at-risk for dropping out, a student must meet one of 13 criteria (e.g., homeless, pregnant). A full definition of at-risk can be found online here.

- *Cultural competence:* Many grantees were located in diverse areas with high-risk populations. Grantee applications, progress reports, and interviews highlighted grantee recognition of the importance of cultural competence,[7] particularly as it related to student and family engagement in dropout prevention efforts. One campus had a teacher who helped translate for Spanish-speaking parents during home visits to explain the importance of CDR, while other campuses had counselors who worked primarily with Hispanic students to provide support and encouragement.

- *Good communication:* Findings from progress report responses and case studies indicated that strong relationships and clear communication between CDR partners, school staff, and district staff served to facilitate program implementation. CDR grantees noted that frequent communication with partners about their needs, expectations, and the successes and challenges they faced were particularly critical to successful implementation. All Cycle 1 grantees mentioned that clear and effective communication strategies were established and maintained during the two years of programming.

- *Relationship of CDR staff with students:* Findings from the case studies indicated that the CDR program provided students the opportunity to build positive relationships with adults. Case study grantees reported that the development of strong relationships between CDR staff and participating students facilitated implementation by laying a foundation for the program that fostered communication and student engagement.

- *Community support:* Some Cycle 2 grantees felt that broad community support and partnerships were key to the implementation of their programs. These partnerships yielded workshops, trainings, and a variety of other experiences that helped students develop critical workforce skills and understand the importance of completing their education.

Barriers to implementation included:

- *Coordination of a large number of partners:* Given that the average Cycle 1 CDR grantee had more than five partners and the average Cycle 2 grantee had more than six partners, tracking those partnerships and coordinating services proved to be a challenge in some cases. For example, one grant coordinator reported feeling stretched thin in providing services from a number of partners across a number of sites. To address this issue, one grantee added "honorary partners" for job shadowing during the second year of implementation that were available only if there was student interest.

- *Parent participation:* Several CDR grantees reported that parents of prospective and participating students were not supportive of CDR. In multiple grantee locations, parents were reported to lack understanding of how specific CDR initiatives would help their children (e.g., providing students with the opportunity to attend college), or were hesitant to have their children be labeled as "dropouts" (a resistance shared by students as well). To overcome this barrier, grantees invited parents to attend workshops, college and/or career fairs, parent-teacher conferences, and sometimes conducted home visits on weekends; however, during the second year of implementation, (CDR Cycle 1) grantees still reported difficulty engaging parents.

- *Limited funding and resources:* Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees had to re-assess what services and opportunities they could provide to their students due to poor economic conditions affecting their CDR partners, as well as limitations on how funding could be used. One grantee noted that economic hardship had limited CDR partners from contributing to activities such as mentoring and employment opportunities.

[7] Cultural competence refers to the ability to effectively interact with people of different cultures.

- *Natural disasters:* Houston ISD and Port Arthur ISD were impacted by Hurricane Ike (September 2008). Both districts got off to a slower start than anticipated because schools were closed for two weeks in Houston and four weeks in Port Arthur at the beginning of the 2008–09 school year. Houston ISD was able to begin implementation shortly after schools were open, while Port Arthur experienced a much longer delay in program implementation. Port Arthur ISD began full implementation of CDR in the 2009–10 school year.

- *Scheduling difficulties:* Cycle 2 grantees cited the difficulty of scheduling program activities and meetings to accommodate the conflicting schedules of school and district staff, students, parents, and CDR partners. Students often had prior work, extracurricular, or familial obligations that prevented them from being able to participate in CDR activities after school. Parents of students often could not attend events scheduled to highlight the importance of CDR due to work obligations – a difficulty that one grantee attempted to address by holding parent-teacher conferences at the parents' worksites. Additionally, CDR partners were limited by school schedules, especially given TAKS preparation activities that could not be interrupted. School staff also had their own prior responsibilities (e.g., as teachers who had to juggle classwork with additional work from being involved in CDR) and attempted to accommodate students as much as possible – sometimes even providing weekend tutorials.

> ***"I am very thankful about having joined Collaborative. It has given me a lot of helpful information about what to do for myself and get ready for college."***
>
> -CDR Student

- *Program name:* The program name itself (Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program) posed a barrier to recruitment and participation of students, with its perceived identification of students as "dropouts." Parents were reticent to label their children as such, and children did not want to be identified as dropouts either. A few grantees addressed this issue by re-naming the program and putting an emphasis on academic achievement, rather than dropout reduction.

Findings from Student-Level and School-Level Outcome Analyses

Student participants' passing rates (i.e., proficiency rates) from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) from the baseline year (2007–08 for Cycle 1, Year 1 students; 2008–09 for all others) were compared to passing rates from the end of the first year in which students were enrolled in CDR. Needed data were available for 2,797 CDR students (51%) on TAKS-Math, 2,868 students (53%) on TAKS-Reading, and 863 students (16%) on TAKS-Science.[8] Key findings, which are mainly based on the first administration of TAKS[9], include:

- ***CDR students' proficiency in TAKS-Math improved between the year before and the year after they entered the program.*** The percentage of CDR students who met standards in TAKS-Math increased 9 percentage points, from 46% at baseline to 55% at the end of the first year. These results were compared to state averages, which were weighted by year, grade level, and subject to reflect the composition of CDR students. CDR students had stronger gains in TAKS-Math proficiency (+9

[8] Altogether, 5,432 students were served by CDR, so the findings for TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading represent slightly more than half of the students served. Valid data were not available in many cases because (a) students took an alternative form of the TAKS, or (b) students did not have valid data for both time points, which may be due to a variety of factors such as being absent on test day, exempt due to LEP status, or if the student moved in or out of state.

[9] All Cycle 2 TAKS results are based on the first administration of the exam. In the first year of the evaluation, the evaluation team tried to address missing data among Cycle 1 students by including second administration data as well. Given that this effort added data for less than 100 students to the analysis, it did not affect the results of the analyses. In order to maintain consistency in the results presented between the Interim Report and this report, second administration data for a small number of CDR Cycle 1 students is included in the analysis.

percentage points) than gains that would be expected from state averages (+6 percentage points). Moreover, the percentage of at-risk CDR students who met TAKS-Math standards increased 12 percentage points, which compared favorably to a 10 percentage point increase that could be expected from at-risk students in Texas.

- ***CDR students' proficiency on TAKS-Reading was slightly higher between the year before and the year after entry into the program.*** The percentage of CDR students who met standards in TAKS-Reading increased from 79% at baseline to 82% in the year following entry into the program. This increase of 3 percentage points was slightly higher than the expected change based on state averages (+2 percentage points). However, CDR students who were at risk did not experience gains in proficiency that were stronger than the state averages for at-risk students. CDR students who were at risk had a 3 percentage point improvement in TAKS-Reading while at-risk students in the state gained an average of 4 percentage points.

- ***CDR students' proficiency in TAKS-Science increased markedly between the year before and the year after entry into the program.*** The percentage of CDR students who met standards in TAKS-Science increased from 43% at baseline to 78% in the year following entry into the program. This 35 percentage point increase compared favorably to the state average (+23 percentage points). Moreover, CDR students who were at risk had a 41 percentage point increase in TAKS-Science proficiency, which outpaced the state average for at-risk students (+39 percentage points). The sample size for TAKS-Science analyses is relatively small because there is no Grade 9 TAKS-Science exam, and as a result, the only students who have two consecutive years of TAKS-Science data were Grade 11 students who took the TAKS Exit Level exam. The general state trend for TAKS-Science indicated a much higher passing rate for the TAKS Exit Level exam than the Grade 10 TAKS-Science exam that was used as a baseline measure.

The evaluation team also investigated the effect of sustained engagement in CDR among a subset of Cycle 1 students (*n*=192) who had remained in the program for two consecutive years. CDR students who remained in the program for two years were found to have lower TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math proficiency rates after one year in the program, but demonstrated significantly higher rates of proficiency in the second year. This indicates the need for sustained engagement of CDR students – and the need for patience given that it takes time to turn a child's life around.

Results from a school-level quasi-experimental study between CDR schools and matched comparison schools indicated no statistically significant differences between CDR and comparison schools on TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math proficiency rates. The small sample size of schools in this analysis (n=11 Cycle 1 schools and 26 Cycle 2 CDR schools) provided little statistical power to demonstrate significant results.

Although the research methods used cannot definitively attribute improvements in academic performance to CDR initiatives, there is both qualitative and quantitative support for this finding. Quantitative TAKS results were consistently positive for CDR students and CDR staff interviewed during site visits confirmed that they have seen noticeable improvements in students' academic performance. Through a number of initiatives designed to improve academic achievement, including cross-age tutoring programs, dual-credit courses, flexible scheduling, tutoring, and academic advisory services, CDR grantees may have been responsible for these improvements. Grantees attributed the following to their initiatives: improvements in students' grades, more time-on-task as a result of fewer behavioral problems, and exposure to new ways of learning. In particular, grantees' focus on technical education may in part explain the significant improvements in science proficiency. Sustained engagement of students also appears to be a contributor to academic success.

Other outcomes beyond TAKS proficiency rates were investigated that also provide an indication of the college and career readiness of CDR students:

- **Completion Rates**: 160 of the 210 high school seniors served by CDR in the 2008–09 school year graduated, which represents a graduation rate of 76%. Of the remaining 50 high school seniors served, 23 students dropped out and 27 were retained. This graduation rate is slightly above district-wide averages (class of 2008) for five of the six Cycle 1 CDR grantees. An additional 60 Cycle 1 students in Grades 10 and 11 graduated with the assistance of credit recovery programs. The school-level quasi-experimental study indicated that Cycle 1 CDR schools had stronger gains in graduation rates than their comparison schools between baseline and one year following implementation of CDR. CDR schools had a 5% increase in graduation rates, compared to a 1% gain among comparison schools. However, this result was not statistically significant.

- **Dropout Rates**: The annual dropout rate among CDR students was 7.9% for the 2008–09 school year, which was above district-wide averages for all six Cycle 1 CDR grantees (district-wide annual dropout rates among these grantees ranged from 2% to 5% in the 2007-08 school year and 1% to 6% in the 2008-09 school year). It is unclear why CDR students had such a high dropout rate, but certainly one possibility is that CDR grantees targeted the most at-risk students within a given school, so they would naturally be expected to have higher dropout rates than the general student population. The school-level quasi-experimental study indicated that CDR schools had stronger reductions in both annual (-1%) and longitudinal (-3%) dropout rates than their comparison schools, which had a 0.3% increase in annual dropout rates and a 1% decline in longitudinal dropout rates over the same period. This result, like all school-level quasi-experimental study results for this evaluation, was not statistically significant due in part to the small sample size in the analysis.

> ***"It has helped me develop a business like behavior which helped me stay professional during school hours."***
>
> -CDR student

- **Course Completion**: A higher percentage of students served by Cycle 1 CDR grantees passed Algebra I (+3%), Algebra II (+14%), Geometry (+2%), English I (+8%), English II (+12%), and English III (+4%) in the first year of the program (2008–09), compared to the year prior to entering the program (2007–08). These findings suggest that CDR may be helping students progress in school at a faster rate and provide an indication of college readiness among CDR students.
- **Perceptions of College and Career Readiness**: Both CDR staff and students perceived student gains in course completion, technical knowledge, oral and written communications skills, ethical behaviors, and leadership skills.

Promising Practices for Service Provision

Findings from the case studies revealed promising practices that may contribute to the overall success of the CDR case study sites. The promising practices identified below were identified by CDR grantees as contributors to their success in attaining positive outcomes for students. These practices could be adopted and modified by future CDR grantees to meet their unique needs.

- *Attendance incentives:* Both monetary and non-monetary attendance incentives were utilized by case study grantees to improve attendance rates among students. One incentive strategy grantees used was an attendance contract; the attendance contracts were monitored closely by CDR staff and were signed by students, CDR staff, and, oftentimes, parents. Another attendance incentive strategy used by grantees was the provision of a monetary reward, prize, or early dismissal for participating students with good attendance. Additionally, at one grantee school, students with excellent attendance were invited, along with their families, to an awards ceremony where they were recognized for their attendance records.

- *Other incentives:* In addition to attendance incentives, case study grantees also sought other ways to provide incentives for students and families. For example, one grantee offered a $50 incentive for CDR seniors who attended TAKS tutoring. The students were required to attend at least 10 hours of TAKS tutoring to qualify for the stipend. Another grantee encouraged parents to give permission for their children to participate in the CDR program by hosting a dinner for students and their families that "made it like an honor" to be selected for the program. An additional incentive for some students was access to dual-credit courses[10] that would have been out of reach due to financial limitations.

- *Opportunities for paid employment:* CDR grantees provided workforce skills development services to 1,436 students in the 2009–10 school year. Of these students, 330 CDR students were employed, including 208 students (63%) in paid jobs or internships. Participating CDR students were provided opportunities such as tutoring elementary students or working in fields that aligned with their career interests. One barrier to paid employment was the age of students in the program, as many jobs required students to be at least 16 years old. An additional barrier identified was immigration status; students who did not possess proof of citizenship could be denied jobs.

- *Communication:* Good communication among district staff, school staff and community partners, as well as with students was essential to the success of the CDR programs. One grantee promoted good communication by convening all CDR district and school staff once a week; additionally, the external community partners met with CDR district and school staff once per month. This ongoing communication allowed the community partners to provide feedback to district/school personnel. Another grantee developed a computer-based system that sent alerts to counselors and assistant principals when participating students were absent or when their grades fell below a certain point, thereby enabling the counselor to immediately intervene and speak with students. Similarly, another grantee faced with the challenge of high student mobility implemented monthly CDR staff meetings to promote networking among campuses and to update student lists and track participating students.

- *Virtual learning:* One grantee successfully utilized virtual learning technology as a component of the CDR program. Through NovaNET, a comprehensive online courseware program, the grantee implemented virtual learning programs, such as Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, and Academics (DELTA) and Virtual School Programs (VSP), that regularly monitored student progress towards high school completion. NovaNET allowed teachers to check their students' progress virtually through usage logs maintained by the software program. These usage logs allowed the students' teachers to see how much time each student spent in their courses and what activities the students were working on within each course. Each student's work could be seen in real time, so support could be focused for each student's needs as they arose. VSP student/teacher meetings were held twice per week to ensure that any barriers, whether academic or personal, were resolved quickly. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-program student participant surveys that assessed changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding school completion and job attainment.

- *Removing "dropout" from the program title:* One grantee acknowledged that the word "dropout" had negative connotations for students and parents. In order to combat the stigma attached to "dropout," the grantee renamed their CDR program to the High School Success Program (HSSP).

[10] Dual-credit courses are college courses taken by high school students for which students earn both high school credits and college credits at the same time.

Findings from Cost Analyses

> ***"I learned to accept some of the decision my teachers made and listen more closely and pay more attention to what I do in class."***
>
> -CDR student

Budgets and expenditures reported for both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees show that, while grantees were able to spend CDR grant funds on a variety of activities, the majority (90%) of funds were spent on organizational expenses, such as payroll costs for program staff and contracted services to work with community organizations. There was particular interest in understanding the use of student incentives, including food service during after-school and weekend activities. Only one CDR Cycle 1 grantee budgeted funds for food service (but did not spend any funds for food service) and none of the CDR Cycle 1 grantees budgeted funds for student incentives, which falls under other operating costs. None of the CDR Cycle 2 grantees budgeted funds for food service, and two of the CDR Cycle 2 grantees budgeted funds for student incentives and spent part of these funds during the first year of the grant period.

Cycle 1 grantees were awarded an average of $226,578 in grant funds, whereas average actual expenditures were $168,936, or 75% of budgeted amounts, indicating that Cycle 1 grantees spent fewer TEA funds than they planned for in their budgets. On the other hand, these grantees spent more matching funds ($10,955) than originally planned ($6,747), which indicates that CDR Cycle 1 grantees leveraged matching funds during the grant program period, which may lead to more sustainable programs over the long run.

For Cycle 1 grantees, the budgeted amounts and total expenditures in broad categories across the entire grant period were available. The six Cycle 1 grantees served a total of 1,924 students during the two years of the grant award period (through April 30, 2010) and spent an average cost per student of $527. Because Cycle 1 grantees originally projected to serve 1,355 students, the program proved to be more cost-effective than the original expectation of $834 per student. Given that CDR Cycle 1 grantees implemented programs that cost less than similar well-known dropout prevention programs, the investment in CDR appears to be cost-effective for Cycle 1 grantees.

Only one year of expenditure data was available for Cycle 2 grantees at the time of this report, so interpretation of this data is limited. The data from only one year are even more limited because grantees are not required to draw down funds as they spend what was awarded. In other words, grantees make decisions about when to draw down awarded funds as long as they draw down all funds by the final deadline established by TEA. Because of these limitations, the "cost per student" value was only reported for the first year of the Cycle 2 grant project period. Thus far, Cycle 2 CDR grantees have served 3,508 students at an average cost of $399 per student. Continued tracking of the number of students served, outcomes achieved, and funds spent on the CDR program by Cycle 2 grantees will lead to a better understanding of the cost-effectiveness of CDR Cycle 2 grants.

Conclusions

Preliminary findings indicate that CDR students experienced statistically significant improvements in TAKS-Math, TAKS-Reading, and TAKS-Science. Moreover, these improvements in TAKS proficiency outpaced state averages and gains in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Science among at-risk CDR students outpaced state averages for at-risk students. Qualitative findings from CDR stakeholders generally support the presence of positive effects in academic achievement. CDR students also experienced improvements in course completion rates, and the program's first year graduation rate of 76% among high school seniors is above the average for five of the six CDR Cycle 1 districts.

The results for CDR on both student-level and school-level outcomes were striking in their consistency. Nearly every outcome studied demonstrated either positive movement among CDR students, or positive change relative to a comparison group. While the positive findings from the school-level quasi-experimental study were not statistically significant in part due to small sample sizes in the analysis, the range of positive outcomes appeared to indicate that CDR is having beneficial effects on the college and career readiness of the 5,432 CDR students who were served by the program.

1. Introduction

This evaluation report presents findings from the first two years of the evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction pilot program (CDR), which is one of three programs grouped together as the High School Success Pilot Programs (HSSPP). The other two programs are the Intensive Summer Programs pilot program (ISP) and the Mathematics Instructional Coaches pilot program (MIC). Collectively, these three programs were authorized and funded by the Texas Legislature in 2007 so districts could develop and implement programs to prevent and reduce dropout, increase high school success, and improve college and work readiness in public schools.

The Texas Legislature authorized and funded the evaluation of the HSSPP, which is being conducted by ICF International (ICF) under contract with the Texas Education Agency (TEA). The four objectives of the evaluation of CDR are the following:

- To describe and evaluate the implementation of CDR
- To evaluate the impact of CDR on student outcomes (e.g., academics, graduation, dropout)
- To evaluate the impact of CDR activities on students' career readiness skills (e.g., employment and internship opportunities for students)
- To determine the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR

The evaluation of CDR is scheduled to continue through August 2011.

The Dropout Problem in the United States

School dropout in the United States (US) has been called a "crisis" or an "epidemic" by various sources who work closely with this issue nationally (Edley, 2004; Powell, 2008). Regardless of the name given to the situation, there is no doubt that dropping out of school is a widespread and serious problem in the US, with enormous consequences for students who choose to drop out. Without a diploma, dropouts face increasingly bleak career prospects tied largely to entry-level employment. They also may remain far behind in a technology-driven age where career skills are not simply a plus, but a requirement. According to the US Census Bureau (2006), a high school dropout earns an average of $9,000 less per year than a high school graduate. This difference translates into an earnings loss of $260,000 over a lifetime for more than half a million young people who drop out of high school each year. A recent report suggests that the US can regain $45 billion lost in tax revenues, health care expenditures, and social service outlays if the number of high school dropouts were reduced in half (Levin, Belfield, Muenning, & Rouse, 2007).

Dropouts cost the public an estimated $24 billion each year in crime, food stamps, housing assistance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

(Riggs, Carruthers, & Thorstensen, 2002)

Many factors contribute to students dropping out of school, including poverty, low literacy and achievement levels, parenting responsibilities, and the need to earn money through employment. According to researchers from the National Center for Education Statistics, only 75% of high school students graduated on time in the 2006-07 school year (Stillwell, 2010). Moreover, only 62% of African-American students and 64% of Hispanic students in the U.S. graduated from high school in four years, which is lower than rates for White (81%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (91%) students. In addition, graduation rates have been found to be lower for

Three-quarters of state prison inmates are dropouts.

(Harlow, 2003)

males than for females (Stillwell, 2010). While these rates may differ by demographic characteristics, dropout is nonetheless a universal problem faced by nearly every school in the US. Despite an expansion of government resources on K-12 education, dropout rates have changed little during the past 15 years.

The Dropout Problem in Texas

Statewide, the class of 2009 had a four-year (i.e., longitudinal) dropout rate of 9.4%.[11] Of course, some students in Texas are more at risk of dropping out than others. Table 1.1 provides a list of student risk factors that may be associated with higher dropout rates, the prevalence of these risk factors as a percentage of student enrollment in the state in 2009–10, and four-year dropout rates for the class of 2009. Texas districts enroll a sizable number of students who are limited English proficient (LEP). In 2007–08, approximately 17% of students had LEP or bilingual status, and 29% of LEP students in the class of 2009 cohort dropped out of school. Approximately 10% of students in Texas were receiving special education services in 2007–08 (TEA, 2008a). While special education students in the class of 2008 had lower dropout rates than LEP students in the same cohort, they nonetheless dropped out at a higher rate (15%) than the state average (9%).

In addition, student enrollment data show that more than half of Texas K-12 students are economically disadvantaged. With this high poverty rate comes diverse challenges. Economically disadvantaged students are more likely to drop out of school (11% vs. 9% state average), and addressing the needs of these students is an ongoing concern from the elementary years onward (TEA, 2008a). Students who were at risk experienced similar dropout rates to economically disadvantaged students (12%).

Differential dropout rates among groups of students with these risk factors provide a possible glimpse into the future, and help us understand the challenges facing CDR grantees. For example, LEP students are nearly twice as likely to drop out of school as the average student in the state. Given that the percentage of LEP students in Texas has been growing in recent years (from 14% in 2000-01 to 17% in 2009–10), it stands to reason that this trend will put pressure on dropout rates in the years to come (TEA, 2001, 2008a).

As a result of these trends and challenges, Texas is implementing four key strategies to reach students at risk of dropping out of school. These strategies, which have been developed by drawing on evidence from previous research,[12] include:

- Data systems to identify struggling students who need early intervention: These systems are designed to identify students at risk of dropping out, determine their needs, and ensure that appropriate services are provided. For example, TEA has funded the Texas Ninth Grade Transition Program (TNGTI), which includes the implementation of an early warning system by each grantee.
- Learning environments that are challenging and personalized for each student: Within a personalized learning environment, TEA encourages rigorous and relevant instruction to improve engagement of students in learning academic and social skills necessary to become college and career ready. TEA initiatives fostering such learning environments include Early College High Schools, High Schools That Work, the College Readiness Initiative for Middle School Students, and T-STEM Academies.
- Mentors who are used as role models and advocates for students: Mentors can help students address academic, social, and emotional needs that are barriers to academic achievement. CDR encourages

[11] A dropout is defined as a student who is enrolled in public school, does not return to public school the following fall, is not expelled, and does not graduate, receive a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die. The longitudinal dropout rate is calculated by dividing the number of dropouts by the sum of on-time graduates, plus continuers, plus GED recipients, plus dropouts.

[12] Additional information on these strategies can be found online.

social supports for students through mentoring. Other TEA initiatives with a mentoring component include Amachi Mentoring, Communities In Schools, and Texas GEAR UP.

- Academic support to students who are behind in school: Providing targeted academic support can help address skill gaps and enrich the learning environment for students who are off track. TEA sponsors academic support through CDR, as well as 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the Investment Capital Fund, the Limited English Proficient Student Success Initiative, and the Optional Extended Year Program, among others.

Although dropout remains a challenge in Texas – and especially for some groups of students –TEA has funded a number of initiatives (including CDR) that employ evidence-based strategies to support students who are most at risk of dropping out of school.

Table 1.1

Texas K-12 Enrollment (2009–10) and Four-Year Dropout Rate (Class of 2009), by Risk Factor

Risk Factor	Percentage of K-12 Enrollment	Four-Year Dropout Rate
Special education	9.6%	14.5%
Economically disadvantaged	59.0%	10.9%
LEP	16.9%	29.1%
At-risk students	47.2%	12.4%
State Average		**9.4%**

Source: TEA, Division of Performance Reporting, Academic Excellence Indicator System 2007–08 State Performance Report

Note: At-risk students are defined as students who exhibit at least one of 13 risk factors. A complete listing of these risk factors can be found online here.

Previous Research on Dropout Prevention Programs

Schools across the country are implementing a variety of strategies to reach students at risk of dropping out of school. These strategies include mentoring and monitoring students, utilizing alternative high schools, and reorganizing schools into smaller "learning communities" (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008). By mentoring and monitoring students, large urban high schools are able to keep track of at-risk youth and identify community services that may help students stay in school and reach graduation. Alternative high schools allow students to earn their diplomas in a small school setting with a focus on vocational training and real-world experiences. School-wide reorganization involves a system-level change where schools are restructured into smaller learning communities, often by grade level, and a new curriculum is introduced with higher academic standards to better prepare students for college (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008).

Research on successful dropout prevention strategies has become more plentiful in recent years, and several efforts have been undertaken nationwide to help practitioners identify best practices in dropout prevention – including TEA's commission of a study on Best Practices in Dropout Prevention in 2008. Table 1.2 presents evidence-based strategies that were identified in at least two of the six sources of "best practices" that were

reviewed. Results are organized by level of implementation (i.e., state/district, school, and student) and then by number of sources reporting this practice as evidence-based. Within each level, themes are listed in descending order of number of sources, so that themes common to the most sources are presented first. Keys to level and source codes are displayed below the table.

Table 1.2

Common Strategies Recommended to Address Dropout

Level	Strategy	Sources	Number of Sources
State/District	Multiple approaches/All dropouts are different*	A,B,C	3
	Data-based decision making	A,B,F	3
	Technical assistance to schools and districts	C,F	2
School	Staff beliefs/school environment for change*	A,B,C,D	4
	Make students want to stay in school – do not punish them (including grade retention)*	A,B,C,D	4
	Family involvement/outreach*	A,C,D,E	4
	Community collaboration/involvement*	A,C,E	3
Student	Mentoring/adult advocates*	B,C,D,E	4
	Academic support/enrichment/tutoring*	A,B,D,E	4
	Behavior/social skills*	A,B,E	3
	Personalize the learning environment*	B,D	2
	Attendance monitoring*	A,E	2

* Strategies pursued by the majority of CDR programs

Note: A=Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007; B=Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008; C=ICF International and the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, 2008; D=Arizona Department of Education, n.d.; E=What Works Clearinghouse, 2008; F=Bounds, Martez Hill, & Smith, 2007.

Most of these "best practices" strategies are being implemented as part of CDR, as TEA has recognized the importance of including multiple strategies to address dropout through this program. Specifically, community collaboration/involvement, which is the basis of CDR, was listed in three of these sources as a strategy for addressing the dropout problem. Strong partnerships between the school and community are fostered by sharing resources and expertise, as well as working together to design a program that meets the needs of students (Coalition for Community Schools, n.d.). Community partnerships are valuable to schools because they provide students access to social services, create unique learning opportunities, and promote opportunities for students to develop new relationships (Berg, Melaville, & Blank, 2006).

Overview of Report

This evaluation report provides a summary of evaluation findings to date for two cohorts of CDR grantees: Cycle 1 grantees first implemented or modified their programs in the 2008–09 school year, and Cycle 2 grantees began in the 2009–10 school year. In the next section, an overview of CDR is presented. Following, section 3 presents the evaluation approach used to assess the implementation of CDR and the impact of CDR on student outcomes. It also presents the approach used to evaluate the cost and sustainability of CDR. Sections 4–8 present the results of the evaluation. Specifically, Section 4 describes the implementation of CDR by Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees. Section 5 includes the findings on the effectiveness of CDR on student outcomes, and Section 6 presents the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR. Section 7 presents the discussion of CDR findings and next steps in the evaluation.

2. Overview of CDR

Background

Just as the decision to drop out is influenced by multiple and interrelated personal, demographic, social, and school-based factors, CDR is designed to be multi-faceted and involve cooperation among schools and individuals and organizations from outside of the traditional school community to provide effective interventions and services to students at risk of dropping out of school. The consequences of a student's decision to drop out of school have serious and negative ramifications for both the individual and society as a whole. Texas has taken a number of steps to reduce the dropout rate, increase graduation rates and postsecondary readiness, and involve multiple stakeholders in these efforts.

Program Goals

CDR was designed to provide grantees opportunities to create a new local collaborative dropout reduction program or to expand/enhance an existing program. The purpose of CDR is to foster collaborations with local businesses, other local governments or law enforcement agencies, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education to deliver proven, research-based dropout intervention services.

The specific goals of CDR include the following:

- Increasing the number of students graduating from high school
- Reducing the number of students who drop out of school in the community
- Increasing students' job skills
- Increasing students' employment opportunities
- Providing continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school, including dropout recovery and re-entry programs
- Preparing students to graduate college-ready
- Sustaining dropout reduction and recovery strategies beyond the grant program
- Providing models of effective community-based dropout prevention and recovery efforts to serve as guides in developing future program and policy initiatives in the areas of dropout prevention and serving at-risk students

This section provides a description of CDR, which was authorized by the Texas Education Code (TEC) §29.096 and funded by Rider 53 (General Appropriations Act [GAA], Article III, 80th Texas Legislature) and Rider 51 (GAA, Article III, 81st Texas Legislature).[13] A description of the key components of the program is included in Table 2.1.

[13] More information about CDR can be found on TEA's website here.

Table 2.1

Description of the Two Cycles of CDR Grants[14]

Program Component	CDR
Short Description	Strategies are provided for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities, for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school
Project Period Cycle 1	08/01/08-02/29/12 (43 months)
Number of Grantees Cycle 1	6[15]
Total Cycle 1 Funding (total Project Period)	$2,718,936
Project Period Cycle 2	04/01/09-02/28/11 (22 months; continuation funding is currently being planned for this cycle)
Number of Grantees Cycle 2	16
Total Cycle 2 Funding (total Project Period)	$3,866,098 +$2,853,750 planned continuation funding
Targeted Grade Levels/School Types	9-12 (any combination)
Key Grantee Partners	Community Agencies, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), and Businesses
Maximum Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Award Amount per Grantee (total Project Period)	$250,000 max
Matching Funds Required for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Grantees (total Project Period)	Yes (by partners) (10% of grant request)

Source: CDR Grant Request for Application (RFA), 2007 and 2008 (Texas Education Agency, 2008b, 2008c)

Project Period

The project period for the six Cycle 1 grant projects is August 1, 2008 to February 29, 2012 (43 months). Cycle 2, which includes 16 grantees, is funded from April 1, 2009 to February 28, 2011 (22 months). Allocated funding for Cycle 1 grantees for the entire project period is $2.7 million, with the maximum Cycle 1 award amount per grantee set at $250,000. In addition, 10% of the amount requested through CDR grant in matching funds must be provided for Cycle 1 grantees by the project partners. Cycle 1 grantees were able to begin program implementation as soon as the action plan and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) were approved by the TEA, and had the option to choose to have a planning period prior to implementing their project.

[14] TEA funded a third cycle of CDR grantees, which is outside the scope of this evaluation.

[15] One grantee did not implement the program with fidelity in the 2008–09 school year. Hurricane Ike, which made landfall on September 13, 2008, forced the closure of the grantee's school system for an extended period of time. Although this grantee did not implement with fidelity in the 2008–09 school year, the grantee did implement CDR in 2009–10.

Allocated funding for Cycle 2 grantees for the entire project period is $3.9 million. Similarly to Cycle 1, the maximum amount per Cycle 2 grantee was set at $250,000. TEA has allocated $1.2 million for a third cycle of CDR grantees; however, these grantees will not be covered under this evaluation.

Funding for the six Cycle 1 CDR grantees was used to implement programs in 15 schools. The 16 Cycle 2 CDR grantees implemented their programs in 26 schools.

Eligible Districts and Open Enrollment Charter Schools

Eligible school districts or open enrollment charter schools included those that had 75% or more of students enrolled in the district that are identified as being economically disadvantaged. At least 50% of the students served in the program had to be identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. In addition, eligible school districts or open enrollment charter schools had to be financially stable, and charter schools had to be open and have active charters. Eligible districts had the option to form shared services agreements (SSAs) with other eligible districts in order to apply for grant funds and implement a collaborative arrangement including multiple districts within a shared geographical region, but an eligible SSA could include no more than ten eligible districts.

Program Requirements and Approved Program Activities

CDR projects must provide a variety of services using research-based strategies for at least 20 students[16] in high school (Grades 9-12) in all of the following four service areas:

- *Workforce Skill Development* – CDR projects must facilitate paid employment, internship opportunities, and advanced career and vocational training for participating students (e.g., cooperative education programs, school-based enterprises, internships and apprenticeships, job shadowing opportunities, mentoring, and career guidance) with at least one local business, as well as other employers.

- *Academic Support* – CDR projects must provide academic services to students, including tutoring programs, course recovery and reentry, academic acceleration, active learning strategies, career and technical education, individualized instruction, educational technology, and software to enhance student learning.

- *Attendance Improvement* – CDR projects must provide interventions to improve student attendance. Activities may include truancy and attendance intervention and incentive programs, activities designed to foster student engagement and school attachment, positive behavior support, and other activities designed to increase school attendance and reduce truancy and tardiness.

- *Student and Family Support Services* – CDR projects must provide social service interventions to students that address social, emotional, and personal student needs including health issues, emotional and mental health needs, family concerns, substance abuse, involvement with the juvenile justice system, and other issues that may prevent or hinder student academic performance and success.

The four required service areas focus CDR projects on some of the most common needs among at-risk students. CDR grantees may implement activities within the four service areas using a variety of research-based strategies that best address the needs of local students and communities.

[16] Students must be authorized to participate by a parent or other person standing in parental relationship.

CDR grantees were required to designate a lead educational staff member (coordinator) to conduct outreach activities designed to identify and involve eligible students as well as public and private entities to participate in the program. This position could be a full-time or part-time position in a paid or volunteer capacity at the district's discretion, as long as the coordinator could complete the necessary recruitment and coordination efforts.

Approved Use of Funds

CDR grantee funds must be expended on programs that support the improvement of high school graduation rates and postsecondary readiness. CDR grantees had the option to use the funds in the following ways:

- Provide additional services for students or their families by public or private entities.
- Encourage local business support of the program by encouraging employees to mentor students and provide other school-related volunteer activities. Matching funds were used to provide paid time off to local business employees for volunteer activities, including mentoring students and other activities related to encouraging the involvement of parents of students enrolled in the program in both collaborative and school activities.
- Provide for electronic course delivery for participating students for the purposes of credit recovery, acceleration to meet local and state graduation requirements, and the delivery of courses for dual enrollment and college credit. Electronic course delivery was used to provide supplementary instruction to increase college and workforce readiness.

Grantees were able to use up to 5% of the grant award for direct administrative expenses. Funds had to be used to supplement (increase the level of services) not supplant (replace) funds from the federal, state, and local sources designated to support similar activities.

Critical Success Factors

In addition to specified program goals, TEA asked the evaluation team to monitor critical success factors for CDR, which are measurable characteristics believed to be critical in obtaining program goals/outcomes. These indicators enabled TEA to determine whether grantees were on track to successfully achieve the goals specified for CDR. These indicators included the following:

- All participating students have Personal Graduation Plans (PGPs) that reflect the rigor of the recommended plan.
- Students are participating in credit recovery programs and are recovering credit sufficient for graduation.
- Students are receiving academic support services.
- Students are receiving attendance support services.
- Students are receiving student and family support services.
- The school attendance, grades and behavior of participating students are improving.
- Students are participating in workforce training, job shadowing, employment internships and other job skill activities.

Summary

CDR was implemented to address the high dropout rate in Texas schools. Districts and open enrollment charter schools eligible for CDR grants had to have at least 75% of students enrolled identified as being economically disadvantaged and at least 50% of students served identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. The 22 Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees that were awarded grants had the option to create a new program – or to expand/enhance an existing program – through which they collaborated with local community partners to reduce the number of students who drop out of school, increase their job skills and employment opportunities, and provide continuing education opportunities. CDR grantees worked to accomplish these goals through four required activity areas: workforce skill development, academic support, attendance improvement, and student and family support services. Approved activities were broadly defined so that grantees could provide additional services to students and their families, and grantees were specifically encouraged to engage in partnerships with local businesses to mentor students, as well as provide electronic course delivery.

3. Methodology

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

- Evaluate the implementation of CDR instructional strategies and programs
- Evaluate the impact of CDR on student outcomes
- Evaluate the impact of CDR on students' career readiness skills (e.g., ethical workplace behaviors)
- Assess the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR

Evaluation Approach

The current evaluation began in September 2008, and is scheduled to end in April 2011. Major deliverables of this evaluation include an interim evaluation report and this final evaluation report. Per Rider 69 (GAA, Article III, 81st Legislature) and depending on further funding, an additional report on the effectiveness of CDR would be due to the Texas Legislature in January 2013.

This final evaluation report was designed to provide a detailed account of evaluation findings for the 2008–09 school year, and a preliminary review of data available for the 2009–10 school year. This final report for CDR includes a thorough presentation of the implementation, and a partial presentation of the impact and cost effectiveness/sustainability of CDR grantees. Although some outcome data were not available at the time of this writing (e.g., dropout, graduation, and promotion rates for 2009–10), the report nonetheless provides the latest evidence available on CDR.

Research Design

The ICF evaluation team employed a design in the evaluation of CDR that used both quantitative and qualitative data to construct a comprehensive picture of CDR. Data sources included extant data that provided demographic, programmatic, and achievement information and new data collection from key CDR stakeholders through interviews and surveys. Together, these data sources allowed for the synthesis of results across CDR Cycles and among CDR participants and stakeholders.

Research Questions

Research questions were developed to address each of the four evaluation objectives outlined by TEA. Table 3.1 presents the evaluation objectives and their associated research questions.

Table 3.1

CDR Evaluation – Matrix of Evaluation Objectives and Research Questions*

Evaluation Objectives	Research Questions
1. To describe and evaluate the implementation of CDR instructional strategies and programs	What were the characteristics of schools served through CDR?
	What were the demographic characteristics of students served through CDR?
	In 2008–09, how did schools/ campuses implement CDR? Who were the partners? What were the roles and responsibilities of those involved? What types of activities was part of the program?
	What was the level of student participation (i.e., attendance) at each grade level and overall?
	What were the barriers and facilitators to implementation of CDR?
2. To evaluate the impact of CDR on student outcomes	What was the relationship between degree of program implementation and student achievement, dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores?
	How were dropout prevention strategies related to student achievement, dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores?
	How did continuing education opportunities affect student achievement, dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores?
	To what extent did student level of participation in the program affect student achievement, dropout rates, graduation rates, promotion rates, course completion rates, and SAT/ACT scores?
3. To evaluate the impact of CDR activities (e.g., employment and internship opportunities for students) on students' career readiness skills.	What types of activities were conducted to impact student career readiness skills?
	What were the perspectives of stakeholders (e.g., students, teachers, administrators) regarding the impact of program activities on technological knowledge, ethical workplace conduct, effective leadership, and oral and written communication skills?
	What was the relationship between the degree of program implementation, student achievement outcomes (degree of implementation, student achievement markers, and perceptions of student career readiness skills), and perceptions of career readiness skills?
4. To determine the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR.	How were grant funds allocated?
	What were the factors contributing to and prohibiting the ongoing sustainability of CDR?
	How did CDR implementation cost per student compare to program outcomes? How do these savings differ from alternative programs (e.g., cost to prevent a student from dropping out of school, cost of recovering a student who has dropped out of school)?
	What practices/ models were successful at grantee campuses?

* Due to limitations in the availability of data at the time this report was developed, not all research questions will be fully answered in this report. Specifically, dropout, graduation, promotion, course completion, and SAT/ACT outcomes were not available for Cycle 2 grantees. Reported findings on these outcomes are limited to Cycle 1 grantees only.

Data Sources

This program evaluation relied upon extant data (i.e., existing data and information made available by TEA for this evaluation) and new data collection.

Extant Data

Extant data were obtained from the following sources for the evaluation of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees.

CDR Grant Applications. Applications for CDR grants were collected by TEA. The applications provided valuable information pertaining to program needs, objectives (e.g., types of students targeted for participation), and proposed services and activities (e.g., workforce development, academic support services). These documents also provided information about the planned budgetary expenses for each program.

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS). AEIS covers longitudinal information on every public school and school district in Texas. Campus-level information from AEIS was used to match participating CDR schools with non-participating schools along certain school level variables (i.e., percent of students eligible for free/reduced lunch, percent of students at risk, total enrollment in the school, and locality). Results from this quasi-experimental study are available for Cycle 1 schools only. Quasi-experimental study findings for Cycle 2 CDR grantees are only available for TAKS results at the time of this writing.

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). PEIMS contains longitudinal information on all public school students in the state of Texas, including information in the following areas: demographics, academic performance, behavioral indicators, and attendance. This student level demographic information from PEIMS was used in student-level outcome analyses (i.e., hierarchical linear models, which are presented in Appendix G) to examine the relationship between student characteristics and student outcomes.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). TAKS examinations are used to measure student achievement among students in Grades 3 through 11 in areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies. TAKS data are available at the student level and school level. In this report, the effect of CDR on TAKS achievement is investigated at the student level for both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 students, but at the school level for Cycle 1 students only.

New Data Collection

In addition to the extant data described above, new data collection added a number of quantitative and qualitative measures to the evaluation of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees.

Implementation Interviews. Members of the evaluation team conducted telephone interviews with CDR project coordinators and community partner representatives from Cycle 1 grantees in the fall of 2008. The semi-structured interview protocol consisted of 21 open-ended questions. The items were designed to gather information pertaining to the actual implementation and program activities of CDR programs and their perceived program effectiveness. A copy of the implementation interview protocol is located in Appendix A.

Stakeholder Interviews. The evaluation team conducted five site visits during the 2008–09 school year and another six site visits during the 2009–10 school year. During these site visits, interviews were conducted with various CDR stakeholders (administrators, grant coordinators, community partners, and teachers). The interview topics were designed to solicit information on the effectiveness of CDR, quality of CDR partnerships, and sustainability plans for the program. Copies of the stakeholder interview protocols are located in Appendix A.

Student Survey. This survey provided information about the following topics: background information, demographic information, students' families, neighborhoods, and students' general thoughts on school, behaviors, jobs and future careers. Students were also asked to evaluate their experiences in CDR and assess the program's helpfulness to students. A copy of the student survey is included in Appendix B.

Site Visits. The ICF evaluation team conducted site visits to five CDR grantees in the first year of the evaluation (2008–09 school year) and another six site visits during the second year of the evaluation (2009–10 school year). These site visits were designed to supplement quantitative data with CDR stakeholder perceptions of their program and its effectiveness. Site visits allowed for the collection of in-depth information that provides a more complete picture than quantitative analyses per se, and generally leads to a more multi-faceted understanding of program findings. In the first year (2008–09), ICF visited all five CDR grantees that were serving students (Port Arthur experienced delays in implementation). In the second year, Cycle 2 CDR sites were selected based on the diversity (or uniqueness) of their service approach, and a subset of the largest Cycle 1 CDR grantees were selected for return site visits For further information on the findings from individual CDR site visits (i.e., case studies), please see Appendix C.

CDR Grantee Uploads. TEA required grantees to report data once each semester for each school that implemented CDR. Data were uploaded by grantees to a central system at TEA. These CDR grantee uploads provided information on the following aspects of CDRs: (1) which types of CDR services were provided to each student (i.e., academic preparation, counseling, behavioral support, social services, family services, and career development), (2) the average number of hours students participated in the different CDR activities, and (3) the number of days students were absent from CDR.

Partner Survey. In the 2009–10 school year, CDR grantees were asked to administer a survey to their partners which covered various aspects of the collaboration process (e.g., communication, division of responsibilities). The evaluation team used data from these surveys to understand the quality of collaborative efforts. A copy of the partner survey is included in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

For this report, the ICF evaluation team conducted a series of analyses to understand how and why outcomes differed across students and grantees. The findings from quantitative analyses were integrated with qualitative findings and content analyses to generate overall statements about the effectiveness of CDR, participants' perceptions, and cost/sustainability analyses. Below, each evaluation objective and the analytic methods by which these objectives were addressed are outlined.

Implementation of CDR (Evaluation Objective 1)

The implementation analyses yielded quantitative information on the level of student participation at each grade level. Other data gathered include the types of students enrolled in CDR programs, and the kinds of schools that received CDR grants. In order to better describe the level and types of implementation, implementation interviews with CDR project coordinators and community partner representatives and CDR stakeholder interviews were conducted. Evaluation team members also conducted content analyses on open-ended responses and themes were developed to describe overarching issues facing CDR grantees.

Impact of CDR on Student Outcomes (Evaluation Objective 2)

The student outcomes analyses examined CDR's effects from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. From the qualitative perspective, CDR stakeholder interviews and the implementation interviews with CDR project coordinators and community partner representatives detailed different stakeholders'

perspectives on the effectiveness of CDR, the level of implementation of each program, the level of student participation, and the relationship between CDRs and their community partners. These qualitative data were then supplemented with quantitative analyses, of the measures from stakeholder surveys. Additionally, statistical models were used to learn whether the relationship between CDR and student academic achievement (i.e., TAKS scores) was significant.

The other major component of this evaluation was a school-level quasi-experimental study between CDR schools and non-CDR schools. A quasi-experimental study is a type of research that involves the comparison of the "treatment" group (in these case, CDR schools) with a "comparison" group that did not participate at all in CDR. This allows researchers to estimate what would have happened in the absence of the treatment. In this case, the evaluation team developed a comparison group of non-CDR schools that were matched to CDR schools on a number of characteristics that were observed the year prior to program implementation (i.e., at baseline). By comparing outcomes between CDR and non-CDR schools in the following year (i.e., the implementation year), an estimate of the effects of CDR could be made. Comparison schools were chosen using propensity score matching for 11 of the 15 Cycle 1 CDR schools, and for all 26 Cycle 2 CDR schools. Details on the propensity score matching procedure (including the variables that were used in the matching process) are presented in Appendix D.

Impact of CDR Grants on Other Relevant Outcomes (Evaluation Objective 3)

CDR programs targeted other relevant outcomes, including developing workplace skills among students. Using information from the implementation interviews and the key stakeholder interviews, content analyses revealed the different types of CDR program activities and the impact they had on participating students. In particular, the student survey was evaluated to shed additional light on the following topics: students' future plans, students' self-efficacy measures,[17] positive workplace behaviors, family, and neighborhood measures. Descriptive analyses were used to examine the students' survey responses.

Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability of CDR (Evaluation Objective 4)

Using extant data (AEIS, CDR grantee applications, and grantee uploads), implementation interviews, and CDR stakeholder interviews, the ICF evaluation team was able to analyze the cost breakouts across CDR districts and explore how these costs compared to planned expenditures from CDR grants. Additional analyses of program costs provided a cost per student figure. Finally, the ICF evaluation team examined the qualitative survey responses and assessed the sustainability efforts of each program.

[17] Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capability to perform in circumstances that exercise influence over events in their lives.

Limitations and Cautions

At this point in the evaluation, several limitations exist in the data, methodology, and findings:

- It was not feasible to conduct an experimental study on CDR, as neither schools nor students could be randomly assigned to treatment and control groups. Therefore, the ability to clearly attribute findings to the presence of CDR will be limited. This limitation was addressed, in part through the conduct of a multi-method study, which allowed for the triangulation of results from a number of quantitative and qualitative analyses.

- There were only 21 CDR grantees and the limited number of grantees compromises the ability to make inferences about grantee cohorts or program models.

- Grantees served different numbers of students, and some larger grantees may drive some of the findings. This caution is especially appropriate for the interpretation of Cycle 1 findings. Because Brownsville served 926 (48%) of the 1,924 students in Cycle 1, results from this grantee contribute disproportionately to our conclusions about results for all Cycle 1 grantees.

- Additional data not available at the time of this writing for Cycle 2 students included dropout, course completion, graduation data, behavior, and attendance data. The fundamental nature of the conclusions presented in this report may change with the analysis of these new data. Given that the number of students served by CDR greatly expanded with the 16 Cycle 2 grants, it is possible that conclusions may change considerably after these data become available and are analyzed.

The reader is encouraged to interpret results with caution, keeping these limitations in mind.

Summary

CDR is a complex program because each grantee is implementing a different set of services in different settings with different student populations. In order to understand these differences, the evaluation team drew upon a number of data sources, such as student surveys, PEIMS data, TAKS data, case study site visits, and partner surveys. By capturing rich detail from case studies to supplement the quantitative findings such as TAKS scores, the evaluation team is in a better position to identify whether CDR is working, and how.

This section discussed the four core evaluation objectives of this study, and the research design used to evaluate CDR. The following sections describe the findings from CDR evaluation. Specifically, Section 4 assesses Evaluation Objective 1 (program implementation) for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees. Section 5 presents findings on Evaluation Objective 2 (student outcomes) and Evaluation Objective 3 (career readiness) for CDR grantees. Section 6 provides information on the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR (Evaluation Objective 4).

4. Implementation of CDR: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Grantees

In this section, an overview of the implementation of CDR Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grants during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years is provided, along with the evaluation team's findings on the barriers and facilitators of effective implementation. Background characteristics are also provided (e.g., demographics of students served), which provide important context for the findings. This section addresses Evaluation Objective 1: To describe and evaluate the implementation of CDR instructional strategies and programs.

CDR Grantees

CDR Cycle 1 consists of six grantees, offering a diverse set of services to student participants. Cycle 1 grantees are located in three general areas of the state: Brownsville (Brownsville ISD and Los Fresnos CISD), San Antonio (School of Excellence in Education and Edgewood ISD), and Houston (Houston ISD and Port Arthur ISD). The 16 Cycle 2 grantees are located across the state, serving 26 schools. This cohort includes: Austin ISD, Carrizo Springs CISD, Corsicana ISD, Dallas ISD, Dallas Can! Academy Charter, Del Valle ISD, Everman ISD, George Gervin Academy Charter School, Harlandale ISD, McAllen ISD, Palestine ISD, Pasadena ISD, Plainview ISD, San Antonio ISD, Snyder ISD, and Spring Branch ISD.

Both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees had to address four required service areas: (a) workforce skill development, (b) academic support, (c) attendance improvement, and (d) student and family support (TEA, 2008c). Each grantee developed a unique CDR program that reflected the needs of its students. For example, some grantees created a separate campus for the CDR program, while others operated CDR programs within participating high schools. Additionally, the individual focus of each grantee's program was different. While all grantees included aspects of all four service areas in their CDR program, some programs emphasized certain areas over others. Moreover, while about half of the grantees (10 of 22) developed and tailored their own programs, the other half adopted a branded program, meaning that certain program components were adopted from preexisting interventions.

Table 4.1 contains a general overview of each CDR grantee, including the city where the grantee is based, program name, grades served, school setting (i.e., public or charter), number of schools served, number of students served, district dropout rates, and grant amount. Fifteen of the 22 CDR grantees served students in Grades 9-12, although a few grantees served specific grades at the high school level. One grantee (Los Fresnos) also targeted students beyond high school age: up to 25 years old.

The number of students served ranged from 50 in San Antonio ISD to 926 in Brownsville. The student counts presented in Table 4.1 are unduplicated counts, and do not reflect the fact that 541 Cycle 1 students served in 2008–09 also received CDR services in 2009–10. The majority of the students were served in a school district campus setting, while four grantees served students in a charter school setting. In addition, most CDR grantees were funded at or close to the $250,000 level. Edgewood ISD received the least first-year funding at $130,000 followed by Corsicana ISD at $174,777. More detailed information about funding and expenditures in the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years can be found in Section 6 of this report.

Table 4.1:

General Information on Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Grantees

Cycle	Grantee Name	City	Branded Program Name	Grades Served	Setting	Number of Schools Served	Number of Students Served (2008–09 and 2009–10)	Dropout Rate (Class of 2008)	First Year Grant Amount[18]
1	Brownsville ISD	Brownsville	Collaborative Dropout Reduction Pilot Program (+ STARS Program for Course Recovery)	9-12	School District Campus	5	926	14.9%	$250,000
1	Edgewood ISD	San Antonio	Edgewood ISD Middle College Program	9-12	School District Campus	2	160	18.3%	$130,000
1	Houston ISD	Houston	Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program	9-12	3 School District Campuses and 1 Charter School Campus	4	158	18.7%	$250,000
1	Los Fresnos CISD	Los Fresnos	College, Career and Technology Academy (CCTA)	10-12	School District Campus	1	174	9.1%	$250,000
1	Port Arthur ISD	Port Arthur	Ripple Effect and Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program	9-12	School District Campus	2	285	20.0%	$229,493
1	School of Excellence in Education	San Antonio	Project STEPS	9-12	Charter School Campus	1	221	18.5%	$249,975
2	Austin ISD	Austin	Jobs, Inc. Program / Dropout Recovery Pilot Program	9-12	School District Campus	2	69	12.4%	$249,999
2	Carrizo Springs CISD	Carrizo Springs	Self-developed program	9-12	School District Campus	1	315	9.0%	$237,500
2	Corsicana ISD	Corsicana	Options Program	9-12	School District Campus	1	104	14.2%	$174,777
2	Dallas ISD	Dallas	Self-developed program	9, 12	School District Campus	3	167	21.2%	$250,000
2	Dallas Can! Academy Charter	Dallas	Self-developed program	9-12	Charter School Campus	1	124	43.3%	$250,000
2	Del Valle ISD	Del Valle	Pathway to Graduation	9	School District Campus	1	198	6.1%	$250,000
2	Everman ISD	Everman	Self-developed program	9-12	School District Campus	1	316	10.3%	$250,000
2	George Gervin Academy Charter School	San Antonio	George Gervin Academy Pilot Program	9-12	Charter School Campus	2	69	38.5%	$250,000
2	Harlandale ISD	San Antonio	Self-developed program	9-12	School District Campus	3	198	8.6%	$248,850
2	McAllen ISD	McAllen	McAllen Learning Institute	9	School District Campus	1	389	16.1%	$224,927
2	Palestine ISD	Palestine	Self-developed program	9-12	School District Campus	1	500	4.3%	$250,000
2	Pasadena ISD	Pasadena	Self-developed program	9-11	School District Campus	5	314	17.2%	$250,000
2	Plainview ISD	Plainview	Self-developed program	9-12	School District Campus	2	172	16.2%	$250,000
2	San Antonio ISD	San Antonio	Project Connect	9	School District Campus	1	50	22.9%	$250,000
2	Snyder ISD	Snyder	Self-developed program	9-12	School District Campus	1	407	12.1%	$250,000
2	Spring Branch ISD	Houston	Self-developed program	9, 11, 12	School District Campus	1	116	10.2%	$250,000

Source: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Grant Applications; AEIS 2008–09; Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 student uploads, 2008–09 and 2009–10

Note: Students served for two consecutive years were only counted once in the Number of Students Served column

[18] Grant amount does not include continuation funding for Cycle 1 grantees

Characteristics of CDR Schools

While the CDR grants were awarded to local education agencies (LEAs [school districts and open-enrollment charter schools]), the LEAs could target specific schools for CDR activities. Altogether, 13 Cycle 1 schools implemented CDR as expected during the 2008–09 school year; 2 Port Arthur schools fully implemented CDR in the 2009–10 school year, bringing the total number of Cycle 1 schools that implemented CDR to 15. With the 16 Cycle 2 awards in the spring of 2009, a much larger pool of CDR grantees became a part of the evaluation. Altogether, the 16 CDR Cycle 2 grantees originally intended to implement their programs in 31 schools. However, CDR was not implemented at five high schools (Hac DAEP High School [Harlandale ISD], Instr/Guide Center, Southwest Key Program, Achieve Early Education [McAllen ISD], and The Summit High School [Pasadena]), bringing the number of schools served down to 26.

The student populations at all these schools were mostly at risk and economically disadvantaged (Table 4.2).[19] At risk status ranged from 44% of the student population at Snyder High School to 93% of the student population at Texans Can! Academy in Dallas. The percentage of students who were economically disadvantaged ranged from 31% at Snyder High School to 99% at Rivera High School in Brownsville. Only eight of the 41 schools served by CDR had a smaller proportion of economically disadvantaged students than the state average at baseline, and only one CDR school had a smaller proportion of at-risk students than the state average.

The majority of the student population in all 41 CDR schools was from a traditionally defined minority group. Thirty of the 41 CDR schools (73%) had a majority-Hispanic student body, and seven schools (17%) had majority African-American populations. Four schools did not have more than 50% representation from a single racial/ethnic group. Cycle 1 schools had a higher proportion of Hispanic and African-American students, on average, than Cycle 2 schools.

The percentage of students who were LEP ranged from 0% (George Gervin Academy) to 38% (Lee High School in Houston), with the highest percentages of LEP students in Brownsville ISD, McAllen ISD, Austin ISD, Dallas ISD, and Spring Branch ISD. The average proportion of LEP students in Cycle 1 schools (15%) was higher than in Cycle 2 schools (10%).

Table 4.2 also presents mobility rates, defined by TEA as the percentage of the students within a school who have been in membership at the school less than 83% of the school year (i.e., six or more weeks missed in a school year).[20] Mobility ranged from 15% at Memorial High School in Port Arthur to 89% at Houston School in Plainview ISD. Average mobility rates were similar for Cycle 1 (28%) and Cycle 2 (29%) schools; however, these rates were well above the statewide average of 20% in both the 2007–08 and 2008–09 school years.

[19] This section describes the characteristics of CDR schools, not CDR students per se.
[20] Please see the AEIS Glossary, available online, for a full definition of mobility.

Table 4.2:

Student Baseline Demographics and Risk Factors at Targeted Schools for CDR Cycle 1 Grantees (2007–08) and Cycle 2 Grantees (2008–09)

Grantee	Cycle	School Name	Race/Ethnicity			Risk Factors			
			African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Brownsville	1	Hanna High School	0.1%	94.4%	4.2%	86.4%	14.1%	49.0%	16.4%
		Porter High School	0.0%	98.9%	1.1%	98.5%	28.9%	85.0%	22.3%
		Pace High School	0.3%	96.9%	2.5%	96.8%	18.7%	69.3%	22.3%
		Rivera High School	0.4%	98.4%	1.1%	99.0%	20.5%	67.0%	19.6%
		Lopez High School	0.0%	98.9%	0.9%	98.7%	25.3%	71.9%	22.1%
Edgewood	1	Memorial High School	2.3%	97.2%	0.5%	91.1%	9.2%	76.3%	28.3%
		JFK High School	0.8%	97.9%	1.0%	95.2%	7.6%	73.2%	23.3%
Houston	1	Lee High School	13.3%	77.0%	3.5%	88.8%	38.0%	85.2%	34.9%
		Jones High School	69.4%	30.0%	0.2%	75.2%	8.0%	80.2%	32.5%
		Reach Charter School	23.4%	74.1%	2.5%	79.1%	14.6%	86.1%	73.3%
		Wheatley High School	61.4%	37.9%	0.2%	74.3%	9.2%	77.2%	35.3%
Los Fresnos	1	Los Fresnos High School	0.3%	94.6%	5.0%	85.9%	11.6%	59.3%	16.2%
Port Arthur	1	Memorial High School	58.2%	26.2%	3.9%	73.1%	5.6%	52.2%	14.8%
		Memorial 9th Grade Center	57.4%	32.8%	3.7%	81.0%	6.6%	65.4%	17.7%
School of Excellence in Education	1	Rick Hawkins High School	39.2%	53.0%	7.1%	73.2%	1.7%	63.1%	42.3%
Cycle 1 CDR Average			**21.8%**	**73.9%**	**2.5%**	**86.4%**	**14.6%**	**70.7%**	**28.1%**
State Average (all grade levels) 2007–08			**14.3%**	**47.2%**	**34.8%**	**55.3%**	**16.7%**	**48.4%**	**19.8%**
Austin	2	Eastside Memorial High School	16.6%	82.7%	0.6%	89.8%	23.5%	90.4%	NR
Carrizo Springs	2	Carrizo Springs High School	1.3%	90.1%	8.3%	72.9%	4.2%	50.1%	18.5%
Corsicana	2	Corsicana High School	23.4%	38.6%	35.7%	56.6%	4.9%	55.7%	16.3%
Dallas Can! Academy Charter	2	Texans Can! Academy Dallas South Campus	91.0%	8.1%	0.9%	91.0%	1.9%	93.2%	75.0%
Dallas	2	Moises E. Molina High School	7.0%	90.6%	1.6%	78.9%	23.8%	79.2%	21.0%
		Franklin D. Roosevelt High School	81.9%	17.8%	0.4%	79.3%	6.3%	81.4%	37.0%
		W.W. Samuel High School	39.1%	59.5%	1.2%	81.2%	21.6%	85.1%	33.7%

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Table 4.2: (continued)

Student Baseline Demographics and Risk Factors at Targeted Schools for CDR Cycle 1 Grantees (2007–08) and Cycle 2 Grantees (2008–09)

Grantee	Cycle	School Name	Race/Ethnicity			Risk Factors			
			African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Del Valle	2	Del Valle High School	16.5%	72.2%	10.1%	70.2%	8.4%	68.5%	20.5%
Everman	2	Everman High School	55.9%	35.1%	7.2%	64.8%	6.4%	71.1%	25.7%
George Gervin Academy	2	George Gervin Academy	44.5%	47.7%	6.7%	95.4%	0.0%	90.9%	60.5%
Harlandale	2	Harlandale High School	0.7%	97.6%	1.5%	89.5%	7.7%	67.3%	20.4%
		McCollum High School	0.4%	93.3%	5.9%	83.8%	2.9%	68.9%	23.6%
McAllen	2	McAllen High School	0.6%	85.9%	12.1%	49.1%	18.4%	60.8%	20.7%
		Memorial High School	0.6%	89.3%	8.3%	51.0%	13.4%	58.5%	19.3%
		Rowe High School	1.0%	92.3%	4.8%	46.9%	17.8%	60.6%	23.4%
		Lamar Academy	0.8%	90.1%	8.4%	58.0%	11.5%	96.9%	64.9%
Palestine	2	Palestine High School	26.7%	32.3%	40.0%	52.0%	2.7%	50.7%	28.3%
Pasadena	2	Pasadena High School	1.3%	92.6%	5.7%	78.9%	13.5%	71.4%	20.6%
		Sam Rayburn High School	2.4%	82.8%	14.4%	75.9%	11.3%	55.3%	23.0%
		South Houston High School	10.7%	82.5%	5.7%	78.6%	11.5%	56.0%	23.1%
		Dobie High School	18.6%	51.1%	19.1%	47.8%	5.1%	61.9%	15.1%
Plainview	2	Plainview High School	5.7%	69.6%	24.0%	53.1%	3.4%	50.7%	22.1%
		Houston School	6.5%	74.0%	19.5%	58.4%	2.6%	97.4%	89.0%
San Antonio	2	Highlands High School	9.1%	83.8%	6.9%	80.7%	6.2%	76.8%	24.0%
Snyder	2	Snyder High School	4.3%	47.6%	46.7%	31.0%	2.4%	43.7%	15.1%
Spring Branch	2	Spring Woods High School	9.2%	69.8%	16.9%	62.9%	18.2%	58.9%	19.9%
CDR Cycle 2 Average			**18.3%**	**68.3%**	**12.0%**	**68.4%**	**9.6%**	**69.3%**	**29.3%**
State Average (all grade levels) 2008–09			**14.2%**	**47.9%**	**34.0%**	**56.7%**	**16.9%**	**48.3%**	**19.8%**

Source: AEIS. All figures for Cycle 1 grantees are from the 2007–08 school year and all figures for Cycle 2 grantees are from the 2008–09 school year unless otherwise noted.
NR=Not Reported

Note: The following five Cycle 2 campuses did not implement the program: Hac DAEP High School (Harlandale ISD), Instr/Guide Center, Southwest Key Program, Achieve Early Education (McAllen ISD), and The Summit High School (Pasadena).

Table 4.3 presents additional context regarding the 41 schools served by CDR grantees. Baseline accountability ratings are presented for both Cycle 1 schools (2007–08 school year) and Cycle 2 schools (2008–09 school year). At baseline, seven schools had an accountability rating of "Recognized", 24 schools received a rating of "Academically Acceptable", and 10 schools received an "Academically Unacceptable" rating. Six of the schools that received an "Academically Unacceptable" rating were Cycle 1 schools, and four were Cycle 2 schools. None of the 41 CDR schools achieved the highest rating of "Exemplary".[21] Four schools were given a rating using the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) procedures (three schools were Academically Acceptable and one was Academically Unacceptable).

TAKS data from CDR schools indicated that less than half of the student population passed TAKS-Math at ten of 40 schools with valid baseline data.[22] Although the majority of students in all schools met TAKS-Reading standards, virtually all schools had substantial room for improvement on both subjects.

On average, Cycle 1 schools had lower TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading proficiency rates than Cycle 2 schools. Cycle 1 schools averaged 50% proficiency in TAKS-Math and 70% proficiency rates in TAKS-Reading at baseline (2007–08), while Cycle 2 schools had average proficiency rates of 63% for TAKS-Math and 85% for TAKS-Reading at baseline (2008–09).

Unlike Cycle 1 schools, where all grantees reported enrollment in special education that was above the state average, 10 Cycle 2 schools had enrollment in special education below the state average of 9.4%. Two of the Cycle 2 schools also reported enrollment rates in career and technology education below the state average of 21.4%. By contrast, all Cycle 1 schools were above the state average on this measure.

[21] Accountability ratings, in order of distinction, are: "Exemplary" (the highest possible ranking), "Recognized", "Academically Acceptable", and "Academically Unacceptable" (the lowest possible ranking). For more information, please see TEA's Accountability Rating System web page.

[22] One school (Reach Charter School in Houston) did not have valid TAKS data due to small numbers of students taking the TAKS exam. Small cell sizes are masked by TEA to ensure the confidentiality of students' results.

Table 4.3:

Baseline Academic Performance and Enrollment in Special Programs at Cycle 1 (2007–08) and Cycle 2 (2008–09) CDR Schools

Grantee	Cycle	School Name	Accountability Rating	Met TAKS Standard in Math	Met TAKS Standard in Reading	Enrolled in Special Education	Enrolled in Career & Technology Education
Brownsville	1	Hanna High School	Recognized	78%	91%	11.7%	75.9%
		Porter High School	Academically Acceptable	64%	78%	16.5%	77.9%
		Pace High School	Academically Acceptable	64%	85%	13.6%	73.2%
		Rivera High School	Academically Acceptable	62%	84%	13.0%	89.3%
		Lopez High School	Academically Acceptable	64%	80%	17.2%	79.6%
Edgewood	1	Memorial High School	Academically Acceptable	46%	77%	16.8%	54.3%
		JFK High School	Academically Acceptable	49%	84%	14.1%	65.3%
Houston	1	Lee High School	Academically Unacceptable	51%	70%	10.1%	78.7%
		Jones High School	Academically Unacceptable	39%	67%	20.1%	65.1%
		Reach Charter School	Academically Acceptable	NR	NR	18.4%	70.3%
		Wheatley High School	Academically Unacceptable	45%	73%	21.2%	85.1%
Los Fresnos	1	Los Fresnos High School	Recognized	84%	91%	11.8%	68.3%
Port Arthur	1	Memorial High School	Academically Unacceptable	11%	10%	11.4%	65.7%
		Memorial 9th Grade Center	Academically Unacceptable	46%	77%	12.8%	66.1%
School of Excellence in Education	1	Rick Hawkins High School	Academically Unacceptable	46%	78%	14.0%	53.9%
CDR Cycle 1 Average				**50%**	**70%**	**14.8%**	**71.2%**
State Average (2007–08)				**80%**	**91%**	**9.8%**	**20.9%**
Austin	2	Eastside Memorial High School	Academically Unacceptable	45%	70%	19.6%	49.5%
Carrizo Springs	2	Carrizo Springs High School	Academically Acceptable	58%	87%	12.2%	89.8%
Corsicana	2	Corsicana High School	Academically Acceptable	69%	90%	10.2%	83.1%
Dallas Can! Academy Charter	2	Texans Can! Academy Dallas South Campus	AEA: Academically Unacceptable	28%	65%	13.0%	10.7%
Dallas	2	Moises E. Molina High School	Recognized	72%	88%	9.3%	56.1%
		Franklin D. Roosevelt High School	Academically Unacceptable	54%	76%	15.5%	43.8%
		W.W. Samuel High School	Academically Acceptable	47%	82%	15.0%	62.7%
Del Valle	2	Del Valle High School	Recognized	70%	90%	13.2%	86.9%
Everman	2	Everman High School	Academically Acceptable	66%	90%	10.2%	66.1%
George Gervin Academy	2	George Gervin Academy	AEA: Academically Acceptable	64%	60%	5.1%	8.9%
Harlandale	2	Harlandale High School	Recognized	66%	88%	12.8%	73.0%

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Table 4.3: (continued)

Baseline Academic Performance and Enrollment in Special Programs at Cycle 1 (2007–08) and Cycle 2 (2008–09) CDR Schools

Grantee	Cycle	School Name	Accountability Rating	Met TAKS Standard in Math	Met TAKS Standard in Reading	Enrolled in Special Education	Enrolled in Career & Technology Education
		McCollum High School	Academically Acceptable	60%	90%	14.6%	78.1%
McAllen	2	McAllen High School	Academically Acceptable	70%	89%	7.9%	67.2%
		Memorial High School	Academically Acceptable	75%	90%	7.7%	72.4%
		Rowe High School	Academically Acceptable	70%	89%	7.5%	71.1%
		Lamar Academy	AEA: Academically Acceptable	69%	91%	3.8%	73.3%
Palestine	2	Palestine High School	Recognized	80%	91%	12.6%	62.1%
Pasadena	2	Pasadena High School	Academically Acceptable	59%	83%	7.1%	75.5%
		Sam Rayburn High School	Academically Unacceptable	64%	85%	7.7%	53.3%
		South Houston High School	Academically Acceptable	62%	85%	7.0%	56.5%
		Dobie High School	Academically Acceptable	69%	91%	5.9%	61.5%
Plainview	2	Plainview High School	Academically Acceptable	67%	92%	16.2%	87.8%
		Houston School	AEA: Academically Acceptable	50%	90%	13.0%	28.6%
San Antonio	2	Highlands High School	Academically Acceptable	52%	87%	15.0%	87.6%
Snyder	2	Snyder High School	Academically Acceptable	70%	92%	13.7%	89.8%
Spring Branch	2	Spring Woods High School	Recognized	77%	91%	11.5%	57.8%
CDR Cycle 2 Average				**63%**	**85%**	**11.1%**	**63.6%**
State Average (2008–09)				**82%**	**91%**	**9.4%**	**21.4%**

Source: AEIS. All figures for Cycle 1 grantees are from the 2007–08 school year and all figures for Cycle 2 grantees are from the 2008–09 school year unless otherwise noted.
NR=Not Reported

Note: An accountability rating preceded by "AEA" indicates that the campus was given a rating under the Alternative Education Accountability (AEA) procedures.

In summary, relative to the state average, the CDR school population was more likely to be from a traditionally defined minority racial/ethnic group, more likely to be economically disadvantaged, more mobile, more likely to have lower academic performance, and more at risk of dropping out. Considering that economic disadvantage, low academic performance, and mobility have been established as risk factors of dropping out (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007), and that minorities and at-risk students in Texas had consistently higher dropout rates, it is evident that CDR grantees reached schools with a large population of students at high risk of dropping out. The next logical inquiry is whether CDR was serving at-risk students within those schools.

Characteristics of Students Served – Baseline Information (2007–08 and 2008–09)

Table 4.4 below reports demographic information on 5,215 of the 5,432 students served by CDR (96%), including 1,821 of the 1,924 students enrolled in Cycle 1 CDR programs (94%) and 3,394 of the 3,508 students enrolled in Cycle 2 CDR programs (97%).[23] Altogether, students served by CDR were split almost evenly by gender, and more than two-thirds (69%) of students were Hispanic. African-American students comprised 20% of the CDR student population, and 10% of the students were White. CDR was serving a relatively even percentage of males and females, with slightly under half of CDR Cycle 1 students (48%) being female and slightly more than half (51%) of Cycle 2 students being female. Moreover, the majority of the student population served by CDR was from a traditionally defined minority group. Of the Cycle 1 students served by CDR grantees over the past two school years, 76% were Hispanic, while 21% were African-American, and 2% were White. Cycle 2 grantees served a lower percentage of Hispanic students (65% in Cycle 2 vs. 76% in Cycle 1) and a larger percentage of White students (15% in Cycle 2 vs. 3% in Cycle 1).

Table 4.4:

Baseline Demographics of Students Who Participated in CDR Activities

	Gender		Race			
	Female	**Male**	**White**	**African-American**	**Hispanic**	**Asian**
Cycle 1: Number (%)	876 (48.1%)	945 (51.9%)	45 (2.5%)	378 (20.8%)	1,385 (76.1%)	12 (0.7%)
Cycle 2: Number (%)	1,716 (50.6%)	1,678 (49.4%)	496 (14.6%)	666 (19.6%)	2,200 (64.8%)	24 (0.7%)
Total: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 (%)	2,592 (49.7%)	2,623 (50.3%)	541 (10.4%)	1,044 (20.1%)	3,585 (68.9%)	36 (0.7%)

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08 & 2008–09 data
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100.
Note: n=1,821 for Cycle 1 (102 with missing PEIMS gender data and 103 with missing race/ethnicity data); n=3,394 for Cycle 2 (114 with missing PEIMS enrollment data and an additional 8 students missing race/ethnicity data)

Table 4.5 breaks down the number of students served by grade level and by grantee. Although three-quarters (76%) of the students served by the Cycle 1 CDR programs were projected to be high school seniors (according to grant applications), the rosters of CDR students served (i.e., uploads) indicated a much more even distribution by grade level. Originally, Brownsville and the School of Excellence in Education reported that they intended to serve 12th graders only; however, both grantees opened up their programs to all grade levels.

Cycle 2 grant applications indicated that 10 grantees planned to serve Grades 9-12, while six grantees targeted particular grade levels (Dallas ISD, Del Valle ISD, McAllen ISD, Pasadena ISD, San Antonio ISD, and Spring Branch ISD). The rosters of Cycle 2 CDR students served indicated a generally even distribution by grade level with the largest percentage of CDR students in Grade 9 (33%).

[23] An appropriate match to TEA data sources could not be made for the remaining 216 students. Demographic data on these students are therefore not available.

Cycle 2 CDR grantees had a higher proportion of Grade 9 students (33%) than Cycle 1 (26%), and slightly lower proportions of Grade 10 and Grade 11 students. The proportion of Grade 12 students was slightly higher among Cycle 2 grantees (26%) than Cycle 1 grantees (24%). The overall grade level distributions of CDR students was relatively even, with 30% Grade 9 students, 22% Grade 10 students, 23% Grade 11 students, and 25% Grade 12 students.

Although the grade-level of students served by CDR was relatively evenly distributed, the number of students served per grantee was not. Brownsville served 879 students who had grade level identifiers and comprised nearly half (48%) of Cycle 1 students. Five of the 16 Cycle 2 grantees (Carrizo Springs, Everman, McAllen, Palestine, Pasadena, and Snyder) collectively served almost two-thirds (64%) of Cycle 2 CDR students. The evaluation results therefore reflect the performance of these grantees more than the other 15 grantees.

Table 4.5:
Number of CDR students Served, by Grade Level (2009–10)

	Cycle	9th	10th	11th	12th	Total	Percentage by Cycle
Brownsville ISD	1	269	244	232	134	879	47.8%
Edgewood ISD	1	6	31	44	31	112	6.1%
Houston ISD	1	65	14	23	53	155	8.4%
Los Fresnos CISD	1	18	19	36	83	156	8.5%
Port Arthur ISD	1	66	91	95	66	318	17.4%
School of Excellence in Education	1	50	32	61	73	216	11.8%
Total: Cycle 1 Grantees		**474 (25.8%)**	**431 (23.5%)**	**491 (26.7%)**	**440 (24.0%)**	**1,836**	**100.0%**
Austin ISD	2	17	20	15	17	69	2.0%
Carrizo Springs CISD	2	107	52	79	77	315	9.1%
Corsicana ISD	2	9	16	23	56	104	3.0%
Dallas Can Academy Charter	2	8	21	54	40	123	3.5%
Dallas ISD	2	70	0	0	97	167	4.8%
Del Valle ISD	2	174	24	0	0	198	5.7%
Everman ISD	2	174	15	31	95	315	9.1%
George Gervin Academy	2	7	6	13	8	34	1.0%
Harlandale ISD	2	13	46	79	60	198	5.7%
McAllen ISD	2	48	68	142	131	389	11.2%
Palestine ISD	2	136	122	145	97	500	14.1%
Pasadena ISD	2	161	153	0	0	314	9.1%
Plainview ISD	2	18	30	34	90	172	5.0%
San Antonio ISD	2	39	9	2	0	50	1.4%
Snyder ISD	2	99	98	121	89	407	11.7%
Spring Branch ISD	2	40	44	0	32	116	3.3%
Total: Cycle 2		**1120 (32.8%)**	**724 (20.9%)**	**738 (21.3%)**	**889 (25.6%)**	**3,471**	**100.0%**
Total: Cycle 1 and Cycle 2		**1,594 (30.0%)**	**1,155 (21.8%)**	**1,229 (23.2%)**	**1,329 (25.0%)**	**5,307**	**100.0%**

Source: CDR Data Uploads, 2008–09 and 2009–10
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100
Note: Cycle 1: n=1,836 (83 with missing PEIMS enrollment data, and 5 students with grades 6-8 PEIMS enrollment data); Cycle 2: n=3,471 (37 students missing grade level data)

Table 4.6 presents further detail about the demographic characteristics of students served by Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees. As shown, 81% of Cycle 1 CDR students were considered at risk and 89% of Cycle 1 students were economically disadvantaged. A majority of Cycle 2 students were also at risk (76%) and/or economically disadvantaged (68%), although slightly fewer than Cycle 1 students.

About 24% of Cycle 1 students were LEP, and 17% of Cycle 1 students were in special education. Students served by Cycle 2 grantees were less likely than Cycle 1 students to be LEP (15%), and less likely than Cycle 1

students to be enrolled in special education (12%). Cycle 2 CDR students were also less likely to be enrolled in career or technical education courses than Cycle 1 students (65% for Cycle 1, 58% for Cycle 2 students). Although greater percentages of Cycle 1 students appeared to be to have factors that put them at risk than Cycle 2 students, it is clear that students served by Cycle 2 grantees also had a strong risk profile.

Table 4.6:

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Baseline Demographic Characteristics: At Risk, LEP, Special Education, Economic Status and Career and Technical Education Enrollment

Characteristic	Cycle 1 (%)	Cycle 2 (%)
At Risk	1,468 (80.6%)	2,583 (76.1%)
Economically Disadvantaged	1,624 (89.2%)	2,311 (68.1%)
Not Economically Disadvantaged	197 (10.8%)	1,082 (31.9%)
Special Education	303 (16.6%)	395 (11.6%)
LEP	434 (23.8%)	507 (14.9%)
Enrolled in One or More State-Approved Career and Technical Courses as an Elective	472 (25.9%)	1,047 (30.8%)
No Participation in Career and Technical Courses	647 (35.5%)	1,434 (42.3%)
Participant in the District's Career and Technical Program	551 (30.3%)	612 (18.0%)
Participant in District's Tech Prep Courses	149 (8.2%)	301 (8.9%)

Source: For Cycle 1: Source: PEIMS, 2007–08 & 2008–09 data; n=1,821 (103 with missing PEIMS enrollment data); For Cycle 2: PEIMS, 2008–09 data; n=3,394 (114 with missing PEIMS enrollment data)

Key Partners

Table 4.7 presents the key partnerships identified by Cycle 1 grantees. CDR grantees were engaged with a wide array of partners; however, differences existed among grantees in the types of partners engaged. For example, Brownsville and Edgewood collaborated with municipal partners, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Department of Community Initiatives, while the School of Excellence in Education worked with faith-based partners. Los Fresnos and the School of Excellence in Education engaged a number of local businesses as partners in the grant program. These local businesses typically provided either jobs or mentors for students in the program. Three of the six grantees engaged in partnerships with colleges and universities, while three of the six grantees partnered with courts or other justice system focused organizations. All six Cycle 1 CDR grantees formed partnerships with community nonprofits. The only Cycle 1 grantee that did not engage a wide variety of partners was Houston. This grantee decided to implement the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, a cross-age tutoring program developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA).

Two programs engaged partners specifically targeting/serving the Hispanic community. The other four grantees did not make similar outreach efforts; however, one explanation could be that the Hispanic population is so large in many places that the grantee and the community necessarily are one and the same and therefore specific outreach efforts were not needed.

Table 4.7:

Key CDR Partnerships: Cycle 1 Grantees

Partner Type	Community Nonprofits	Community Businesses	College/ University	Justice	Hispanic Community Focused	Government Organizations	Faith-based Organizations
School of Excellence in Education	Nevil Shed's Second Chances	AT&T Center; Frost Bank; Bank of America; San Antonio Library		San Antonio Fighting Back	National Council for La Raza (NCLR)		Antioch Community Transformation Network (ACTN)
Los Fresnos CISD	Cameron Works-First Generation In-School Youth Program	Lighthouse Counseling Center; Valley Federal Credit Union; Keppel AmFELS, Inc., A&V Lopez Supermarket; Knight's Inn & Suites; Los Fresnos Eye Clinic & Optical, Inc.	Tech Prep of Rio Grande Valley; Texas State Technical College; The University of Brownsville and Texas Southmost College		United Migrant Opportunity Services		
Houston ISD	Intercultural Development Research Association	Workforce Solutions					
Edgewood ISD	Project QUEST		Alamo Community College District			City of San Antonio Department of Community Initiatives	
Port Arthur	Communities In Schools	Workforce Solutions		Precinct 8 Constables			
Brownsville ISD	Cameron Works		The University of Texas-Brownsville	Cameron County Juvenile Justice Department		Brownsville Chamber of Commerce	

Source: CDR grant applications; site visit data

Cycle 2 grantees also partnered with a wide range of community organizations and local IHEs (Table 4.8). Cycle 2 grantees were most likely to partner with local colleges and universities, community businesses, and community nonprofits. They were least likely to partner with justice departments or Hispanic community-focused organizations.

- 13 out of 16 grantees partnered with local colleges and universities
- 13 grantees partnered with local community businesses
- 12 grantees partnered with community nonprofits
- 5 grantees partnered with faith-based organizations
- 5 grantees partnered with government organizations.
- 3 grantee partnered with a justice department
- 3 grantees partnered with Hispanic community-focused organizations

Relative to Cycle 1 grantees, Cycle 2 CDR grantees had a stronger focus on partnering with IHEs. Although it is difficult to make definitive statements about the focus of Cycle 2 grantees relative to only six Cycle 1 grantees, this difference stands out.

Table 4.8:

Key CDR Partnerships: Cycle 2 Grantees

Partner Type	College/ University	Faith-based Organizations	Community Nonprofits	Justice	Hispanic Community Focused	Community Businesses	Government Organizations
Austin ISD			Skill Point Alliance; Communities In Schools (XY Zone)			A+ Federal Credit Union; Workforce Solutions	Austin Housing Authority
Carrizo Springs CISD	Southwest Texas Junior College; Texas A & M International University	Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church	Middle Rio Grande Development Council			Mi Casa Steak House; Botello's Custom Screen Printing; First State Bank; Dixondale Farms	U.S. Border Patrol; City of Carrizo Springs; Dimmit County
Corsicana ISD	Navarro College	Presbyterian Child and Family Services				Berry Automotive; WorkForce Solutions; Community National Bank	
Dallas Can Academy	Cedar Valley College; University of Northern Texas Dallas Campus; Paul Quinn College		Dallas IMedia Network; Dallas County Advocate Program		Dallas Concilio of Hispanic Service Organizations	Workforce Solutions for North Central Texas; Admiral Construction Company; Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART); La Sima Foundation	
Dallas ISD	Eastfield College; Mountain View College; Southern Methodist University	Gospel Lighthouse Church; Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship	Big Brothers Big Sisters; Education is Freedom; Urban League of Greater Dallas and North Central Texas		Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Dallas Area Rapid Transit	City of Dallas; Dallas Black Chamber of Commerce; Dallas Regional Chamber of Commerce; Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce
Del Valle ISD			The Children's Partnership				
Everman ISD	Tarrant County College; University of North Texas		Communities In Schools; Big Brothers Big Sisters			Work Force Solutions; Teresa's Treasures	
George Gervin Academy			Communities in Schools; CommuniCare Health Center; Beat AIDS Coalition Trust; George Gervin Learning Center	County of Bexar Constable Department Pct 4		Tickets4AnyEvent.com	
Harlandale ISD	Alamo College District	Methodist Healthcare Ministries			LULAC National Education Service Center	University Health Systems	
McAllen ISD	South Texas College					Workforce Solutions	
Palestine ISD	Trinity Valley Community College		ACCESS	Anderson County Juvenile Detention Center; Anderson County Sheriff's Department		All Star Ford Mercury; Bouquets by Katie; Lowe's Home Improvement; Terry Manufacturing; Tractor Supply Company	Palestine Chamber of Commerce

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Table 4.8: (continued)

Key CDR partnerships: Cycle 2 Grantees

Partner Type	College/ University	Faith-based Organizations	Community Nonprofits	Justice	Hispanic Community Focused	Community Businesses	Government Organizations
Pasadena ISD	San Jacinto College		Automotive Youth Educational Services			WorkSource	
Plainview ISD	South Plains College; Wayland Baptist University		Prairie House Living Center			American State Bank; Apex Collision Center; Burger King; Cargill Meat Solutions; Covenant Hospital Plainview; Hale County State Bank; Wal-Mart	
Spring Branch ISD	Houston Community College	Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church	Communities in Schools; Junior Achievement			Workforce Solutions; AMEC Paragon	Greater Houston Women's Chamber of Commerce; Houston West Chamber of Commerce; National Guard Armory
San Antonio ISD	St. Philips College Southwest Campus		Family Violence Prevention Services, Inc.	Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department			
Snyder ISD	Western Texas College						

Source: CDR grant applications; site visit data

Services Offered by CDR Grantees

The four main types of services offered by CDR grantees were: (1) workforce skill development, (2) academic support services, (3) student support services, and (4) student/family support services.

Table 4.9 provides a summary of services most commonly provided by CDR Cycle 1 grantees and Table 4.10 outlines services most commonly provided by Cycle 2 grantees. This section summarizes findings from both tables, which do not correspond exactly since some services were offered more by Cycle 1 grantees than Cycle 2 grantees, and vice versa. Further detail on services provided is included in Appendix E.

Workforce Skill Development

A main focus of CDR grantees was to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities, including entering the workforce. Four of the six Cycle 1 grantees, and 12 of the 16 Cycle 2 grantees, offered paid employment opportunities. Job shadowing opportunities were offered by four Cycle 1 grantees and 10 Cycle 2 grantees. Vocational education was offered by four Cycle 1 grantees and 14 Cycle 2 grantees. All of the Cycle 2 grantees offered students internship possibilities, except for Dallas ISD. In addition, 11 Cycle 2 grantees supplied job preparation workshops. Other workforce skill development services included interview training and feedback, job placement, and vocational assessments coupled with career counseling. Workforce skill development services were provided by school staff in conjunction with local business partners. Altogether, 1,436 CDR

students received workforce skill development services in 2009–10 and 330 students were employed. Among the 330 students who were employed, 208 students were hired in paid jobs/internships and 122 students were placed in unpaid internships.

Academic Support Services

Although most CDR grantees provided for a vocational component, it is evident that college preparation and attendance were primary goals for most grantees. Four Cycle 1 grantees and 13 Cycle 2 grantees offered dual credit programs through partnerships with local colleges and universities. CDR grantees also placed a strong focus on both improving academics and accelerating the path to graduation. The majority of Cycle 2 CDR grantees – 13 out of 16 (81%) – provided credit recovery. Tutoring was offered by 13 of 16 Cycle 2 grantees and five of six Cycle 1 grantees.

Five of the six Cycle 1 grantees offered professional development for teachers, in order to enhance the teachers' skills and better prepare them for assisting students. Thirteen Cycle 2 grantees also supplied a means for improving attendance and truancy, such as an attendance contract. In addition, 11 Cycle 2 grantees offered incentives to students for improvements in either academic performance or attendance rates or both. Several grantees provided services that allowed students to tailor their academic schedule to their personal needs, such as academic acceleration, individual graduation plans, and summer programs. Other commonly-provided services include academic advisors, dropout recovery, and financial aid. Altogether, 610 CDR students received academic support services in the 2008–09 school year, and 3,564 CDR students received academic support services in the 2009–10 school year.

Student Support Services

Academic and vocational support alone will not solve the dropout problem, as students' personal challenges play a large role in their high school experience. Through an integrated array of services, CDR students were provided the opportunity to find a mentor, counseling services, transportation, child care, health care, behavior management, financial literacy, or other supports to ensure that they could concentrate on learning. The most common type of student support service offered was mentoring (4 Cycle 1 and 12 Cycle 2 grantees), and most mentors were peers, teachers, or adults who were not school staff. Other commonly-provided supports included transportation services (four Cycle 1 grantees) and the provision of a dedicated service coordinator (three Cycle 1 grantees). Two Cycle 1 grantees—Los Fresnos and Houston—made dedicated efforts to improve school climate, a known risk factor for dropout (Hammond et al., 2007). Four of the six Cycle 1 CDR grantees offered some type of character education, and three of the six Cycle 1 grantees provided motivational speakers and additional programs to increase attendance. Other innovative programs, such as financial literacy classes and community service activities, were implemented. While many students needed support services, school staff did not always have the time or resources to make student referrals; therefore, 12 of the 16 Cycle 2 grantees dedicated a specific staff member who was responsible for service coordination. In the 2008–09 school year, 220 CDR students received behavior support services and 83 students were connected with community resources. In the following school year (2009–10), 678 CDR students received behavior support services, 1,138 students received attendance improvement services, and 26 students were connected to community resources.

Student/Family Support Services

All 22 CDR grantees involved families in their programs. All six Cycle 1 grantees and eight Cycle 2 grantees provided parenting education, and also involved families in fairs, counseling sessions, or other ways to ensure parental involvement in a student's education and well-being. Three Cycle 1 grantees included home visits with families as part of their programs.

Twelve of the 16 Cycle 2 CDR grantees involved families in services, such as fairs, counseling sessions, and progress reports sent home from the school. In addition, 11 grantees provided classes for parents, including English language learner (ELL) classes, as many parents do not speak English as their first language. In addition, several grantees conducted home visits with families. In the 2008–09 school year, 7 students received family support services, and 675 CDR students received these services in the 2009–10 school year.

Table 4.9

CDR Cycle 1 Grantees: Services Most Commonly Provided

	Number of Cycle 1 Grantees Providing Service	Brownsville ISD	Edgewood ISD	Houston ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Port Arthur ISD	School of Excellence in Education
Family Involvement/home visits	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parenting education	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Postsecondary education assistance	5	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Teacher professional development	5	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Tutoring	5	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Dual credit program	4	✓	✓		✓		✓
Individual graduation / education plans	4	✓	✓		✓		✓
Job shadowing	4	✓	✓		✓		✓
Mentoring	4	✓		✓		✓	✓
Paid employment	4	✓		✓	✓		✓
Transportation	4		✓		✓	✓	✓
Vocational education	4	✓		✓	✓	✓	

Source: CDR Cycle 1 grant applications

Table 4.10

CDR Cycle 2 Grantees: Services Most Commonly Provided

	Number of Cycle 2 Grantees Providing Service	Austin ISD	Carrizo ISD	Corsicana ISD	Dallas CAN!	Dallas ISD	DelValle ISD	Everman ISD	George Gervin Academy Charter
Jobs/ internships	15	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Vocational education	14			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Credit recovery	13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Dual credit programs	13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Means for improving attendance / truancy	13	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tutoring	13	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classes for parents	12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Family involvement	12	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
Mentoring	12		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Paid employment	12	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Staff member for providing outside referrals	12	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Incentives to students	11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

(CONTINUED)

Table 4.10 (continued)

CDR Cycle 2 Grantees: Services Most Commonly Provided

	Number of Cycle 2 Grantees Providing Service	Harlandale ISD	McAllen ISD	Palestine ISD	Pasadena ISD	Plainview ISD	San Antonio ISD	Snyder ISD	Spring Branch ISD
Jobs/ internships	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vocational education	14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Credit recovery	13	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Dual credit programs	13	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Means for improving attendance / truancy	13	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tutoring	13	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Classes for parents	12		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family involvement	12	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Mentoring	12	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
Paid employment	12		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staff member for providing outside referrals	12	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Incentives to students	11			✓		✓	✓	✓	

Source: CDR Cycle 2 grant applications

Intensity of Services Provided by CDR Grantees

Grant coordinators reported student-level service data through CDR student uploads. These data included records for 1,510 Cycle 1 students and 3,508 Cycle 2 students involved in CDR activities during the 2009–10 school year, as well as 955 Cycle students who were served in the 2008–09 school year.[24] Up to three primary service areas were identified for each student.

As shown in Table 4.11, the majority of Cycle 1 CDR students (68% in 2008–09 and 85% in 2009–10) and Cycle 2 CDR students (65% in 2009–10) received academic support such as tutoring or credit recovery. Although the intensity of academic services received by Cycle 1 students dropped from 5.7 hours per week in 2008–09 to 3.5 hours per week in 2009–10, the percentage of students receiving academic services was higher. Cycle 2 had both a lower proportion of students receiving academic services, and a lower average number of hours per week (3.1 in 2009–10) than Cycle 1. Cycle 1 grantees, therefore, can be fairly considered to have had a stronger academic focus than Cycle 2 grantees.

Between the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years, Cycle 1 grantees increased their career development and family support services. Although the intensity of services decreased during this time (2.0 to 1.3 hours per week), a larger proportion of students received these services (8% in 2008–09 vs. 24% in 2009–10). Career development was a strong focus of Cycle 2 grantees. Almost a third (32%) of students received career development services for an average of 4.8 hours per week.

Attendance services were not investigated as a separate category during the 2008–09 school year, but in the 2009–10 school year, 262 Cycle 1 CDR students (17%) received an average of 0.8 hours per week of attendance services. By contrast, 876 Cycle 2 students (25%) received attendance services for an average of 10 hours per week.

Behavior support was provided to a higher proportion of Cycle 1 students than Cycle 2 students. In the 2008–09 school year, almost a quarter (24%) of Cycle 1 students received behavior support services for an average of 2.8 hours per week. The following year, 22% of Cycle 1 students received behavior support services for an average of 1.3 hours per week. Only 10% of Cycle 2 students received behavior support services for an average of 1.1 hours per week.

To summarize, academic services were the primary focus of both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees, although Cycle 1 grantees provided a greater intensity of academic services to a larger proportion of students. Behavior support was the secondary focus of Cycle 1 grantees, while career development and attendance services were the secondary focus of Cycle 2 grantees. Moreover, Cycle 1 grantees appear to provide a smaller number of service hours to a greater proportion of students than Cycle 2, which appears to be more intensive for a smaller number of students.

[24] The 1,510 students served in 2009–10 include 969 students who were new to the program and 541 students who continued from the previous year. Of the students served in the 2008–09 school year, 414 were enrolled in the program for one year only.

Table 4.11:

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Services Received: Intensity of Services and Number of Student Recipients (2008–09 and 2009–10 School Years)

Type of Service	Academic	Behavior Support	Attendance	Career Development	Connection to Resources	Family Support
Cycle 1: 2008–09						
Number of Participants (*n*=955)	610	220	NA	70	83	7
Percentage of Participants Receiving Service	67.6%	24.4%	NA	7.8%	9.2%	0.8%
Average Number of Hours per Week	5.7	2.8	NA	2.0	3.0	1.9
Cycle 1: 2009–10						
Number of Participants (*n*=1,510)	1,281	330	262	355	23	396
Percentage of Participants Receiving Service	84.9%	21.9%	17.4%	23.5%	1.5%	26.2%
Average Number of Hours per Week	3.5	1.3	0.8	1.3	1.6	0.6
Cycle 2: 2009–10						
Number of Participants (*n*=3,508)	2,283	348	876	1,127	3	279
Percentage of Participants Receiving Service	65.1%	9.9%	25.0%	32.1%	0.1%	8.0%
Average Number of Hours per Week	3.1	1.1	10.0	4.8	2.7	1.0

Source: CDR 2008–09 and 2009–10 Student Upload Data
Note: NA=Not available: Data not collected in 2008–09 school year

Hammond et al. (2007) identified a number of domains of risk factors for dropout, including (a) individual background characteristics, (b) early adult responsibilities, (c) social attitudes, values, and behavior, (d) school performance, (e) school engagement, (f) school behavior, (g) family background characteristics, and (h) family engagement. Given that the service areas listed in Table 4.11 are intended to address all of the domains above (i.e., at least the ones that can be modified through the provision of services), it stands to reason that CDR properly addressed a complicated, multi-faceted range of risk factors with an appropriate range of services and interventions.

Facilitators and Barriers to Implementation

In the following section, key facilitators and barriers to program implementation have been identified, based on interviews with CDR program staff and partners:

Facilitators to implementation included:

- *Diversity in programming:* Both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees provided a wide range of services and opportunities in recognition of their students' interrelated problems and needs. Programming included not only credit recovery, tutorials for TAKS and academic subjects, and training in workforce skills, but also extracurricular clubs and home visits.

- *Cultural competence:* Many grantees were located in diverse areas with high-risk populations. Grantee applications, progress reports, and interviews highlighted grantee recognition of the importance of cultural competence,[25] particularly as it related to student and family engagement in dropout prevention efforts. One campus had a teacher who helped translate for Spanish-speaking parents during home visits to explain the importance of CDR, while other campuses had counselors who worked primarily with Hispanic students to provide support and encouragement.

- *Good communication:* Findings from progress report responses and case studies indicated that strong relationships and clear communication between CDR partners, school, and district staff served to facilitate program implementation. CDR grantees noted that frequent communication with partners about their needs, expectations, and the successes and challenges they faced were particularly critical to successful implementation. All Cycle 1 grantees mentioned that clear and effective communication strategies were established and maintained during the two years of programming.

- *Relationship of CDR staff with students:* Findings from the case studies indicated that the CDR program provided students the opportunity to build positive relationships with adults. Case study grantees reported that the development of strong relationships between CDR staff and participating students facilitated implementation by laying a foundation for the program that fostered communication and student engagement.

- *Community support:* Some Cycle 2 grantees felt that broad community support and partnerships were key to the implementation of their programs. These partnerships yielded workshops, trainings, and a variety of other experiences that helped students develop critical workforce skills and understand the importance of completing their education.

Barriers to implementation include:

- *Coordination of a large number of partners:* Given that the average Cycle 1 CDR grantee had more than five partners and the average Cycle 2 grantee had more than six partners, tracking those partnerships and coordinating services proved to be a challenge in some cases. For example, one grant coordinator reported feeling stretched thin in providing services from a number of partners across a number of sites. To address this issue, one grantee added "honorary partners" for job shadowing during the second year of implementation that were available only if there was student interest.

- *Parent participation:* As with Cycle 1 grantees, some Cycle 2 grantees reported that parents of prospective and participating students were not supportive of CDR. In multiple grantee locations, parents were reported to lack understanding of how specific CDR initiatives would help their children

[25] Cultural competence refers to the ability to effectively interact with people of different cultures.

(e.g., providing students with the opportunity to attend college), or were hesitant to have their children be labeled as "dropouts" (a resistance shared by students as well). To overcome this barrier, grantees invited parents to attend workshops, college and/or career fairs, parent-teacher conferences, and sometimes conducted home visits on weekends; however, during the second year of implementation, grantees still reported difficulty engaging parents.

- *Limited funding and resources:* Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees had to re-assess what services and opportunities they could provide to their students due to poor economic conditions affecting their CDR partners, as well as limitations on how funding could be used. One grantee noted that economic hardship had limited CDR partners from contributing to activities such as mentoring and employment opportunities.

- *Natural disasters:* Houston and Port Arthur were impacted by Hurricane Ike (September 2008). Both districts got off to a slower start than anticipated because schools were closed for two weeks in Houston and four weeks in Port Arthur at the beginning of the 2008–09 school year. Houston was able to begin implementation shortly after schools were open, while Port Arthur experienced a much longer delay in program implementation. Port Arthur began full implementation of CDR in the 2009–10 school year.

- *Scheduling difficulties:* Cycle 2 grantees cited the difficulty of scheduling program activities and meetings to accommodate the conflicting schedules of school and district staff, students, parents, and CDR partners. Students often had prior work, extracurricular, or familial obligations that prevented them from being able to participate in CDR activities after school. Parents of students often could not attend events scheduled to highlight the importance of CDR due to work obligations – a difficulty that one grantee attempted to address by holding parent-teacher conferences at the parents' worksite. Additionally, CDR partners were limited by the school's schedule, especially given TAKS preparation activities that could not be interrupted. School staff also had their own prior responsibilities (e.g., teachers who had to juggle class work with additional work from being involved in CDR) and attempted to accommodate students as much as possible – sometimes even providing weekend tutorials.

- *Program name:* The program name itself (Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program) posed a barrier to recruitment and participation of students, with its perceived identification of students as "dropouts." Parents were reticent to label their children as such, and children did not want to be identified as potential dropouts either. A few grantees addressed this issue by re-naming the program and putting an emphasis on academic achievement, rather than dropout reduction.

For further reading on the implementation of dropout interventions, the What Works Clearinghouse released a practice guide on dropout prevention (Dynarski, Clarke, Cobb, Finn, Rumberger, & Smink, 2008). This practice guide, developed by a number of researchers and practitioners in dropout prevention, outlines some key barriers in the implementation of dropout prevention programs and suggested approaches to tackle those problems. TEA also provides a best practices clearinghouse to share Texas-specific evidence-based best practices.

Best Practices in the Development of CDR Partnerships

At the outset of the second year of CDR evaluation, TEA expressed a desire to learn more about how CDR grantees engage in partnerships and about the keys to quality collaborative efforts. In response to this directive, the evaluation team developed and administered a CDR Partner Survey in the spring of 2010. Altogether, 51 partners responded to the survey. Although is it difficult to calculate a response rate for this survey because partners are added frequently (and sometimes dropped), it is clear that the 51 respondents comprise a small proportion of all partnerships fostered by CDR.[26] Therefore, these results are not intended to be interpreted as a representative assessment of CDR partnerships.

The survey covered the following topics:

- General information about the partner's relationship with CDR
- Implementation of the partner's service offerings
- Cooperation with the CDR grantee district

The survey also included several open-ended questions to capture partners' thoughts on the keys to quality collaboration, as well as key facilitators and barriers to the development of partnerships.

Upon receiving survey responses from the 51 partners, the evaluation team investigated the open-ended text responses to gain a deeper understanding of how partners view their roles in CDR, as well as their perceived effectiveness in contributing to the overall success of the program. The following sections summarize findings from these candid responses.

Barriers and Challenges

The most prevalent challenges faced by partners involved providing services to CDR students, not working with CDR districts per se. These student challenges included lack of student commitment, lack of materials available for students, and challenges in addressing students' motivation. Other notable challenges included limited communication (with both CDR grantees and students), gaining momentum during the implementation process, time limitations, lack of parent involvement, and a limited number of community resources in the area.

These challenges were most often solved through communication with CDR grantees, students, parents, or even other partners. A good deal of persistence and resourcefulness was reported by partners in their efforts to address challenges. For example, one partner addressed a lack of community resources by utilizing their own staff to deliver needed services. Moreover, one partner mentioned the need to temper expectations and build students' job skills in a stair-step fashion, and another partner worked with the school system to provide exploratory classes in a range of career fields.

[26] There are more than 125 documented "key" partners in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8, and there are approximately 300 total partnerships fostered by CDR.

Keys to Success during Implementation

CDR partners were asked to identify the keys to success during the initial implementation of the program. The majority of partners attributed their success to regular communications and close working relationships. Other partners emphasized the need to bring the right people to the table and the need for formal agreements.

Key Facilitators to Successful Partnerships

CDR partners were also asked to identify the key facilitators to successful partnerships. The majority of responses centered on the need for strong communication[27] and a shared vision and understanding of the goals of the program. Other facilitators that were identified by partners include openness to change, flexibility, strong leadership, and a strong sense of dedication to students.

Defining Quality in Collaborative Efforts

Based on the open-ended text responses from partners, four questions from the Partner Survey were identified as the keys to defining quality collaborative efforts:

- Does your organization have a formalized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other formal agreement with the CDR District?
- Do you feel that you understand the goals of your partnership with the CDR District?
- Does your organization share in decision making processes with the CDR District?
- How often does your organization communicate with the CDR District?

Altogether, 19 CDR partners fulfilled all four attributes. Specifically, they had formalized agreements with the CDR district, they felt they understood the goals of the program, they shared in the decision-making process, and they had regular communications (at least once per month). Further detail about how these 19 partners differ from the other respondents appears in Table 4.12.

The 19 partners engaged in high-quality collaborative efforts (i.e., that fulfilled all four key attributes listed above) had stronger self-perceptions of effectiveness on student outcomes. On a scale from one (Poor) to four (Excellent), partners engaged in high-quality collaboration perceived more success than other partners in improving behavior, improving vocational skills, improving career readiness, improving school attendance, and improving college readiness. Moreover, overall perceived success on a scale from one (Extremely Poor) to five (Excellent) was 4.1 for partners engaged in high-quality collaborative efforts, and 3.8 for other partners. Although self-reported effectiveness is stronger among the 19 partners engaged in high-quality collaboration, these differences are not particularly large. However, the average length of the partnership is 26.2 months for partners engaged in high-quality collaboration and 13.7 months for other grantees (due to the small sample size, this difference was not statistically significant). The implication of these findings is that quality collaboration appears to be associated with greater student success, and it may take some time for quality collaborative efforts to emerge. This may also indicate that partners who perceive collaboration to be of high quality are more willing to remain engaged in the partnership.

[27] The term "strong communication" was not defined by respondents. It was provided as a value judgment which will require further study to determine the ideal modes and frequency of communication between grantees and their partners.

Table 4.12

CDR Partner Survey Responses

Question	Partners Engaging in High-Quality Collaborative Efforts (n=19)	Other Partners (n=32)	All Partners
Self-Perceived Success (Range: 1=Poor to 4=Excellent)			
Success in improving academic achievement	3.0	2.9	3.0
Success in improving behavior	3.2	3.0	3.1
Success in improving vocational skills	3.4	3.0	3.1
Success in improving career readiness	3.2	2.9	3.0
Success in improving school attendance	3.1	3.0	3.1
Success in improving college readiness	3.2	2.9	3.0
Success in helping CDR students in the juvenile justice system	3.2	3.0	3.1
Overall Success of the Partnership (Range: 1=Extremely Poor to 5=Excellent)	4.1	3.8	3.9
Average Number of Months Partner has been Working with CDR District	26.2	13.7	18.4

Source: CDR Partner Survey, 2010

Promising Practices for Service Provision

Findings from the case studies revealed promising practices that contributed to the overall success of the CDR case study programs. The innovative practices provided below were implemented by the case study grantees and could be easily adopted and modified by future CDR grantees to meet their unique needs.

- *Attendance incentives:* Attendance incentives were utilized by case study grantees to improve attendance rates among students. One incentive strategy grantees used was an attendance contract; the attendance contracts were monitored closely by CDR staff and were signed by students, CDR staff, and, often times, parents. Another attendance incentive strategy used by grantees was the provision of a monetary reward, prize, or early dismissal for participating students with good attendance. Additionally, at one grantee school, students with excellent attendance were invited, along with their families, to an awards ceremony where they were recognized for their attendance records.

- *Other incentives:* In addition to attendance incentives, case study grantees also sought other ways to provide incentives for students and families. For example, one grantee offered a $50 incentive for CDR seniors who attended TAKS tutoring. The students were required to attend at least 10 hours of TAKS tutoring to qualify for the stipend. Another grantee encouraged parents to give permission for their children to participate in the CDR program by hosting a dinner for students and their families that "made it like an honor" to be selected for the program. An additional incentive for some students was access to dual-credit courses that would have been out of reach due to financial limitations.

- *Opportunities for paid employment:* At some grantee districts, participating CDR students were provided opportunities for paid employment such as tutoring elementary students or working in fields that aligned with their career interests. One barrier to paid employment was the age of students in the program, as many jobs required students to be at least 16 years old. An additional barrier identified was immigration status; students who did not possess proof of citizenship could be denied jobs.

- *Communication:* Good communication among district staff, school staff, community partners, and students was essential to the success of the CDR programs. One grantee promoted good communication by convening all CDR district and school staff once a week; additionally, the external community partners met with CDR district and school staff once per month. This ongoing communication allowed the community partners to provide feedback to district/school personnel. Another grantee developed a computer-based system that sent alerts to counselors and assistant principals when participating students were absent or when their grades fell below a certain point, thereby enabling the counselor to immediately intervene and speak with students. Similarly, another grantee faced with the challenge of high student mobility implemented monthly CDR staff meetings to promote networking among campuses and to update student lists and track participating students.

- *Virtual Learning:* One grantee successfully utilized virtual learning technology as a component of the CDR program. Through NovaNET, a comprehensive online courseware program, the grantee implemented virtual learning programs, such as Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, and Academics (DELTA) and Virtual School Programs (VSP), that regularly monitored student progress towards high school completion. NovaNET allowed teachers to check their students' progress virtually through usage logs maintained by the software program. These usage logs allowed the students' teachers to see how much time each student spent in their courses and what the students were working on within each course. Each student's work could be seen in real time, so support could be focused for each student's needs as they arose. VSP student/teacher meetings were held twice per week to ensure that any barriers, whether academic or personal, were resolved quickly. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-program student participant surveys that assessed changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding school completion and job attainment.

- *Removing "dropout" from the program title:* One grantee acknowledged that the word "dropout" had negative connotations for students and parents. In order to combat the stigma attached to "dropout," the grantee renamed their CDR program to the High School Success Program.

Summary: Similarities and Differences in Implementation between Grantees

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees shared both similarities and differences with regard to grant implementation; some of the key commonalities included the following:

- All grantees aimed to increase graduation, reduce dropout, increase job skills, and provide employment opportunities.

- In all but two schools, the majority of the student population was listed as being at risk.

- All grantees provided linkages to outside organizations to ensure that needs are being met in the most targeted manner possible.

- All grantees offered either paid employment or academic support services to students, with most grantees offering both. Moreover, academic services were the primary focus of both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees.

- All grantees offered a range of services to address a wide range of risk factors for dropping out of school.

Key differences observed between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees included the following:

- Cycle 1 grantees served a higher proportion of Hispanic students than Cycle 2 grantees; Cycle 2 grantees served a higher proportion of White students than Cycle 1. Regardless of these differences, both cycles of grantees served a majority of students from traditionally defined minority groups.

- Cycle 2 grantees served a higher proportion of 9th graders than Cycle 1 grantees.

- Cycle 1 grantees served a higher proportion of students who were economically disadvantaged, at risk, LEP, and enrolled in special education. In short, the risk profile of Cycle 1 students is stronger than for Cycle 2 students.

- Cycle 1 grantees provided a greater intensity of academic services to a larger proportion of students than Cycle 2.

- The secondary service focus of Cycle 1 grantees was behavior support, while the secondary focus of Cycle 2 grantees was on career development and attendance services.

- Cycle 1 grantees provided a smaller number of service hours to a wider group of students; Cycle 2 grantees, by contrast, provided more intensive services to a smaller number of students.

Even with these differences, CDR grantees encountered common challenges in the implementation of their programs. The coordination of partners and scheduling was noted as a challenge. Additionally, the weak economy hampered the participation of partners in terms of providing mentors and employment opportunities, especially in the 2008–09 school year. CDR grantees also shared common facilitators, such as good communication with partners and school and district staff and diversity in service offerings.

The evaluation team was able to distinguish several keys to quality collaboration, as identified by partners and confirmed by the evaluation team. The keys to quality collaborative efforts, as defined by CDR grantees and confirmed by the evaluation team, appear to be the following:

- Development of formal agreements

- All parties understand the goals of the partnership

- All parties share in decision making processes

- All parties communicate regularly

5. Relationship Between CDR and Student Outcomes

This section addresses Evaluation Objective 2 (To evaluate the impact of CDR on student outcomes) and Evaluation Objective 3 (To evaluate the impact of CDR activities on students' career readiness skills). This evaluation of the relationship between CDR and student outcomes should be considered preliminary until all data are available. More specifically, at the time of this writing, data on dropout, graduation, promotion, course completion, and SAT/ACT outcomes were not available for the first full year of implementation of the Cycle 2 grantees (i.e., 2009–10 school year). Data on these outcomes will be presented for students served by Cycle 1 grantee only. TAKS data, however, were available for all CDR students.

Three key sources of data were used to investigate the relationship between CDR and student outcomes:

- **TAKS Data:** The evaluation team investigated student-level changes in TAKS proficiency rates on math, reading, and science between the baseline year and the end of the first year of program implementation. To study TAKS achievement for Cycle 1 students first served in the 2008–09 school year, the evaluation team compared students' 2007–08 TAKS proficiency rates with their proficiency rates from the end of the 2008–09 school year. TAKS proficiency rates for students first served in the 2009–10 school year used 2008–09 results as a baseline.

- **PEIMS Data:** As mentioned earlier, outcome data were collected from the PEIMS system to investigate rates of dropout, graduation, promotion, and course completion among students served by Cycle 1 CDR grantees during the 2008–09 school year.

- **Student Survey Data:** ICF worked with Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees to survey all available students who received services during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school year. This survey covered a range of topics, including future aspirations, school engagement, work status, ethical workplace behaviors, other behavioral data, college/career skills, "customer satisfaction" data on CDR, and information about the student's perceptions of his/her community. Complete data were available from 249 students in the 2008–09 school year, a 27% response rate. An additional 913 CDR students responded to the 2009–10 school year survey, an 18% response rate. Student survey results from the 2008–09 school year were presented in the CDR Interim Report. Survey results from the most recent school year (2009–10) are presented in this section. Because the student survey was administered by grantees, the evaluation team was not in a position to study the source of the low response rates.

- **Case Studies:** The evaluation team conducted site visits during the 2008–09 school year to five Cycle 1 CDR grantees, and an additional six site visits were conducted to a mix of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees during the 2009–10 school year. During site visits, the evaluation team interviewed a range of stakeholders both to gain their perceptions of CDR's effectiveness and to identify areas for improvement. Where possible, the qualitative data drawn from case studies were used to triangulate and thus strengthen the quantitative findings.

Although the TAKS data provided the core evidence of program effectiveness, the power in this evaluation lay in its mixed-method approach. By triangulating findings, a story can be told in rich detail about whether CDR was effective and more importantly, why it was or was not effective, with which students and in what contexts. In this section, three types of analyses are presented to determine whether CDR participation was related to student achievement as measured by TAKS:

- **Descriptive Analyses:** Results from each TAKS exam (i.e., Reading/ELA, Math, and Science) are first described. The percentage of CDR students who met or exceeded TEA standards in each year are presented, and compared to state averages for both all high school students and all at-risk high school students in Texas. These data should be considered descriptive (i.e., conclusions cannot be drawn from these data alone) because state averages and even averages for at-risk students do not constitute valid comparison groups for CDR. CDR grantees had to meet specific eligibility criteria (e.g., 75% or more of a grantee district's students must be economically disadvantaged) which are not typical for other districts in the state. Table 5.1 contains an overview of the percentage of students in Texas who met standards in reading/ELA, math, and science in 2007–08 through 2009–10. Table 5.2 is similar to Table 5.1, but examines state averages for students identified as at risk for dropping out as the comparison. These tables demonstrate that significant variations in proficiency rates were observed by grade level.

- **Statistical Models:** Next, results from a multivariate analysis of student achievement are presented. This analysis, which was conducted using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), has two major advantages over descriptive analyses: (1) by controlling for certain variables [e.g., race, free/reduced lunch], the influence of these variables on TAKS performance was isolated, and (2) the HLM is a multi-level model, which allowed researchers to isolate both student-level and school-level influences on TAKS performance.

- **School-Level Quasi-Experimental Study**: The evaluation team matched each CDR school with a similar comparison school. The development of this comparison group used a technique called propensity score matching, which uses a number of matching criteria to determine non-CDR schools that most highly resemble CDR schools. Matching criteria included the proportion of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, the racial/ethnic composition of the school, the percentage of ELL students, percentage of at-risk students, instructional programs (regular, alternative, DAEP), and charter school status. In addition to TAKS results, this study also investigated how CDR schools performed relative to comparison schools on dropout rates, graduation rates, and completion rates.

Calculating State Averages

Because CDR students were pooled across two cycles of grantees, with two separate baseline years, and across multiple grades – and average proficiency rates for the three TAKS exams (reading, math, and science) differ on each of these dimensions – the definition of "state average" is not intuitive. In order to provide the most fair comparison possible, the definition of "state average" was tailored to each individual student's baseline year, grade level, and exam.

In other words, each of the 36 cells in Table 5.1 represents a different state average, depending on the CDR student's year of entry into the program, grade level, and TAKS subject. The evaluation team considered each of these factors in pooling together a state average that reflected the characteristics of the CDR students. It may be more appropriate to call the state averages derived for this study "expected performance."

For example, a Cycle 1 student entering 9th grade in the first year of the CDR program (2008–09) who did not repeat a grade would have their performance on TAKS-Reading compared to the state average for 8th graders in 2007–08 (i.e., 92%) and for 9th graders in 2008–09 (i.e., 87%). These changes in proficiency rates were pooled to derive state averages that reflected the composition of the CDR students with valid data. A similar procedure was conducted to compare CDR students to at-risk students in Texas (Table 5.2).

Table 5.1:

Summary of TAKS Statewide Results for Reading, Math, and Science, 2007–08 through 2009–10

Grade Level	State Average (All Students in Texas)								
	Reading/ ELA			Math			Science		
	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
8	92%	93%	91%	75%	79%	80%	68%	72%	78%
9	84%	87%	92%	60%	67%	70%	NA	NA	NA
10	86%	88%	90%	63%	65%	74%	64%	66%	74%
Exit Level	90%	92%	93%	79%	81%	89%	80%	85%	91%
State Average (Gr. 9-12 Only)	**86.4%**	**88.8%**	**91.5%**	**66.4%**	**70.5%**	**77.8%**	**71.4%**	**75.0%**	**80.7%**

Source: TEA Statewide TAKS Summary Reports, 2003-2010.

Note: Grade 8 results were used to provide baseline comparisons for 9th graders entering CDR the following year.
Note: NA = Not Applicable (i.e., test not administered or not considered in the analysis)

Note: The state average for Grades 9-12 is a weighted average that is based on the proportion of students who took the TAKS exam at each grade level.

Table 5.2:

Summary of TAKS Statewide Results for At-Risk Students in Reading, Math, and Science, 2007–08 through 2009–10

Grade Level	State Average (All Students in Texas)								
	Reading/ ELA			Math			Science		
	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10
8	84%	85%	80%	55%	59%	60%	44%	49%	56%
9	73%	77%	84%	35%	44%	48%	NA	NA	NA
10	77%	78%	82%	37%	40%	53%	40%	42%	53%
Exit Level	84%	87%	88%	63%	66%	79%	66%	73%	84%
State Average (Gr. 9-12)	**77.4%**	**80.4%**	**83.6%**	**43.7%**	**49.4%**	**59.6%**	**52.5%**	**57.2%**	**64.5%**

Source: TEA Statewide TAKS Summary Reports, 2003-2010, which can be found online here.

TAKS Achievement – Descriptive Analyses

TAKS data from the baseline year were compared to data from the end of the first year of CDR implementation for reading, math, and science, without controlling for other student-level and school-level factors. The baseline year was 2007–08 for students first served in 2008–09 and the baseline year was 2008–09 for students first served in 2009–10. The TAKS results presented in this section therefore indicate the amount of change in TAKS made after students' first year in CDR.

TAKS data were available for both the baseline and the first year after implementation for 2,797 CDR students on TAKS-Math, 2,868 students on TAKS-Reading, and 863 students on TAKS-Science. Because TAKS-Science is not administered to Grade 9 students, the only high school students that have two years of data for comparison are Grade 10 students who took TAKS-Science as 11th graders. Altogether, slightly more than half of the students served by CDR had two years of valid TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math results, and only 16% of CDR students had two years of valid TAKS-Science results. Appendix F contains the results of a missing data analysis to demonstrate how students who were missing data for each of the three TAKS exams studied differed from students who were included in the analysis. The evaluation team found that certain groups of CDR students (e.g., special education, LEP) were underrepresented in the results of our descriptive analyses that appear below; however, this was expected given that these students take alternative forms of the TAKS (e.g., TAKS-Alt) more than others. In order to maintain the fidelity of comparisons among CDR students, alternative forms of the TAKS were excluded from the analysis; therefore, the analyses presented below are not representative of all CDR students, but this is by design. The TAKS results presented below provide a solid indication of the relationship between effectiveness of CDR and academic achievement.

TAKS-Math Results (descriptive analyses)

To examine the change in TAKS-Reading, TAKS-Math, and TAKS-Science passing rates for students who participated in CDR, the evaluation team analyzed TAKS data available for two consecutive years (baseline to the first year after entering the program for both the regular TAKS exam and the accommodated exam). In order to be included in the analysis, CDR students must have taken the TAKS standard or the Accommodated form and have a valid test score for both TAKS exams.[28]

Table 5.3 presents a summary of TAKS-Math achievement for students served by both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees. Of the 2,797 students for whom two valid years of data were available, TAKS-Math proficiency rates increased 9 percentage points, from 46% to 55%. This change in proficiency rate between baseline and the end of the first year was statistically significant.[29] Likewise, at-risk students and economically disadvantaged students also experienced significantly increased rates of math proficiency after the first year of CDR.

Using proficiency rates reported in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, the evaluation team calculated a measure of expected change based on (a) state averages for all students and (b) state averages for at-risk students. As shown in Table 5.3, CDR students' 9 percentage point improvement in mathematics proficiency outpaced the expected change based on state averages (+6 percentage points). However, at-risk students in Texas had stronger gains in mathematics proficiency (+10 percentage points) than CDR students. It is unclear why at-risk students have experienced more growth in proficiency rates than state averages in recent years. The most obvious

[28] Valid data were not available in many cases because (a) students could not be identified with a valid identification number, (b) students took an alternative form of the TAKS, or (c) students did not have valid data for both time points, which may be due to a variety of factors such as being absent on test day, exempt due to LEP status, or if the student moved out of state.

[29] Statistical significance was tested using McNemar's Test, which is a nonparametric method used to compare two population proportions that are related or correlated to each other. This test is used to determine whether the change in proficiency rates increased significantly between baseline and the end of the first year.

explanation is that at-risk students have generally lower proficiency rates than state averages, and therefore these students have more room for improvement. Because most (77%) CDR students are at risk, comparison to the expected change for CDR at-risk students and at-risk students in Texas may be the most appropriate basis to determine how CDR students would fare in the absence of the program. CDR students who were at risk had an 11.9 percentage point increase in math proficiency from baseline to the end of the first year in the program, which was a slightly stronger gain than the 10.4 percentage point increase that would be expected for at-risk students throughout the state. This 1.5 percentage point net increase for CDR students is not particularly large, but it is nonetheless moving in the right direction.

Table 5.3:

Summary of TAKS-Math Results for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Students, Baseline vs. First Year After Entering the Program

			CDR Students			Expected Change Based on State Averages	
	Group	n	Baseline	End of First Year	Change from Baseline to First Year	Basis: State Average for All High School Students in Texas	Basis: At-Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	All Students	2,797	46.0%	55.2%	+9.2 percentage points*	+6.2 percentage points	+10.4 percentage points
	At-Risk Students	2,242	36.5%	48.4%	+11.9 percentage points*		
	Economically Disadvantaged	1,271	44.1%	50.5%	+6.4 percentage points*		

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10

* Change in proficiency rates from baseline to first year is statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Table 5.4 presents TAKS proficiency rates separately for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees. Although Cycle 2 CDR students had stronger gains in mathematics proficiency than Cycle 1 students, the difference in change between these two cohorts was only 2 percentage points. Both cohorts reported gains in math proficiency that outpaced expected changes based on state averages; however, at-risk students in Texas had stronger gains than CDR students as a whole.

Table 5.4:

Summary of TAKS-Math Results Presented Separately for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Students, Baseline vs. First Year After Entering the Program

			CDR Students			Expected Change Based on State Averages	
	Group	n	Baseline	End of First Year	Change from Baseline to First Year	Basis: State Average for All High School Students in Texas	Basis: At-Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	Cycle 1 CDR Students	830	40.7%	48.3%	+7.6 percentage points*	+6.6 percentage points	+10.6 percentage points
	Cycle 2 CDR Students	1,967	48.3%	58.1%	+9.8 percentage points*	+6.0 percentage points	+10.4 percentage points

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10

* Change in proficiency rates from baseline to first year is statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

TAKS-Reading Results (descriptive analyses)

Table 5.5 presents TAKS-Reading (Grades 8 and 9) and TAKS-English language arts (Grade 10 and exit level) results from baseline to the first year after entry into CDR. (For consistency, both tests are labeled as TAKS-Reading.) The percentage of CDR students who met TAKS-Reading standards increased by 2.8 percentage points, from 79% at baseline to 82% after one year. This 2.8 percentage point increase was slightly stronger than the state average, but slightly lower than the change in reading proficiency experienced by at-risk students in Texas. At-risk students in the CDR program had a 3.1 percentage point improvement in reading proficiency, slightly below the rate for at-risk students in Texas (+4.3 percentage points).

Table 5.5:

Summary of TAKS-Reading/ELA Results for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Students, Baseline vs. First Year After Entering the Program

			CDR Students			Expected Change Based on State Averages	
	Group	n	Baseline	End of First Year	Change from Baseline to First Year	Basis: State Average for All High School Students in Texas	Basis: At-Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	All Students	2,868	78.7%	81.5%	+2.8 percentage points*	+2.3 percentage points	+4.3 percentage points
	At-Risk Students	2,315	75.0%	78.1%	+3.1 percentage points*		
	Economically Disadvantaged	1,289	77.0%	79.4%	+2.4 percentage points*		

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10
* Change in proficiency rates from baseline to first year is statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Table 5.6 presents a summary of TAKS-Reading results by cohort. Cycle 1 CDR students had lower baseline reading proficiency levels than Cycle 2 students; however, Cycle 1 students had slightly stronger gains in reading proficiency. Similar to the results for mathematics proficiency, the gains in the percentage of CDR students who met TAKS-Reading standards were stronger than state averages for all students – but not as strong as state average gains among at-risk students.

Table 5.6:

Summary of TAKS-Reading/ELA Results Presented Separately for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Students, Baseline vs. First Year After Entering the Program

			CDR Students			Expected Change Based on State Averages	
	Group	n	Baseline	End of First Year	Change from Baseline to First Year	Basis: State Average for All High School Students in Texas	Basis: At-Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	Cycle 1 CDR Students	843	71.9%	75.3%	+3.4 percentage points*	+2.4 percentage points	+4.2 percentage points
	Cycle 2 CDR Students	2,025	81.5%	84.0%	+2.5 percentage points*	+2.3 percentage points	+4.4 percentage points

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10
* Change in proficiency rates from baseline to first year is statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

TAKS-Science Results (descriptive analyses)

Results for TAKS-Science are based on much smaller sample sizes. Because there is no Grade 9 TAKS-Science exam, the only group of CDR students with two years of valid TAKS-Science data were students in Grade 11 who took the TAKS Exit Level exam at the end of their first year in the program (i.e., with Grade 10 TAKS-Science as a baseline). As shown in Table 5.7, improvements in TAKS-Science proficiency were quite large between baseline and the end of the first year of a student's enrollment in CDR. Rates of TAKS-Science proficiency increased 35 percentage points for CDR students, from 43% at baseline to 78% at the end of the first year. The percentage of at-risk and economically disadvantaged students meeting TAKS-Science standards also increased substantially during this time (+41 percentage points among both groups of students). Because the passing rate is so much higher for the exit-level TAKS-Science exam than the Grade 10 exam, gains appear to be pronounced among all groups.

It is clear that, overall, CDR students' 35 percentage point gain in TAKS-Science proficiency outpaces the expected change based on state averages (+23 percentage points), but not the expected change for at-risk students statewide (+39 percentage points). It is unclear at this time whether some of the gains in TAKS-Science proficiency among CDR students are attributable to the CDR program itself. Some grantees had programs that focus on technical knowledge (e.g., Los Fresnos' College, Career, and Technology Academy) which may explain this change. Also, the magnitude of the improvement in CDR students' TAKS-Science proficiency rates may not be as impressive as it first appears given the appreciable gains in state averages.

Table 5.7:

Summary of TAKS-Science Results for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Students, Baseline vs. First Year After Entering the Program

			CDR Students			Expected Change Based on State Averages	
	Group	n	Baseline	End of First Year	Change from Baseline to First Year	Basis: State Average for All High School Students in Texas	Basis: At-Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	All Students	863	43.0%	78.1%	+35.1 percentage points*	+23.2 percentage points	+38.6 percentage points
	At-Risk Students	697	32.6%	73.9%	+41.3 percentage points*		
	Economically Disadvantaged	308	38.6%	79.9%	+41.3 percentage points*		

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10

* Change in proficiency rates from baseline to first year is statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

Table 5.8 presents TAKS-Science results for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 students. Students from both cohorts had strong gains in science proficiency (over 30 percentage points in each group), and these gains outpaced state averages. However, the increase in the percentage of CDR students that met TAKS standards in science was lower than the rate of change experienced by at-risk students in Texas. Overall, Cycle 2 students had stronger gains in math and science, while Cycle 1 students had stronger gains in reading. In all three TAKS exams studied, Cycle 1 students had lower baseline proficiency levels than Cycle 2 students.

Table 5.8:

Summary of TAKS-Science Results Presented Separately for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR Students, Baseline vs. First Year After Entering the Program

			CDR Students			Expected Change Based on State Averages	
	Group	n	Baseline	End of First Year	Change from Baseline to First Year	Basis: State Average for All High School Students in Texas	Basis: At-Risk High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	Cycle 1 CDR Students	314	30.9%	63.1%	+32.2 percentage points*	+21.2 percentage points	+34.5 percentage points
	Cycle 2 CDR Students	549	49.9%	86.7%	+36.8 percentage points*	+24.1 percentage points	+40.3 percentage points

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10

* Change in proficiency rates from baseline to first year is statistically significant at the p<.05 level.

TAKS Results for 2-Year CDR Students

The second year of the CDR program afforded the opportunity for Cycle 1 grantees to serve some of their students for a second year. Altogether, 541 of the 955 students served in the first year continued to receive services. Of these students, 179 students (33%) had valid TAKS-Math data for three consecutive years (baseline plus the two years they were in CDR), 192 students (35%) had valid TAKS-Reading data for three consecutive years, and only four students had valid TAKS-Science data over the same period. As mentioned previously, TAKS-Science was measured for 10th graders at baseline that took the exit-level exam in the following year. Because this sample for TAKS-Science is so small, it does not warrant significant attention.

As shown in Table 5.9, CDR students that were served for two consecutive years followed a similar pattern in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading: a drop in proficiency rates between baseline and the end of the first year, followed by a gain in the second year of the program. This pattern is similar to the results the evaluation team observed in its study of Communities In Schools (CIS) of Texas: a "U" shaped pattern that indicates a gradual turnaround in students' academic performance.[30] This pattern may be indicative of a situation where CDR grantees are specifically targeting students with the most need (i.e., students on the greatest downward trajectory), or it may simply be indicative of a basic truism in dropout prevention: turning lives around takes time.

These patterns in the data could be interpreted as compelling evidence for the value of sustained engagement with at-risk students. After all, if these students were served a single year, it would not provide enough time to manifest the gains that were observed by the end of year 2. Still, CDR students' improvements in academic proficiency as measured by TAKS cannot be attributed solely to their participation in CDR. There is, however, qualitative evidence for the effectiveness of CDR in improving academics.

[30] A copy of the Communities In Schools of Texas evaluation can be found online here. Table 14 on p. 47 of the report demonstrates this "U" shaped pattern in results.

Table 5.9:

Summary of TAKS Results for CDR Students Who Remained in the Program for Two Consecutive Years (Cycle 1 Only)

	Subject	n	Baseline	End of First Year	End of Second Year	Total 2-Year Change for CDR Students	Expected Change: State Average for All High School Students in Texas
Percentage of Students Who Met Standards	TAKS-Math	179	58.7%	55.9%	70.9%	+12.2 percentage points	+13.4 percentage points
	TAKS-Reading/ELA	192	83.3%	76.6%	83.3%	0 percentage points	+3.6 percentage points

Source: TAKS Student-Level Results, 2007–08 through 2009–10

Information gleaned from the qualitative analyses indicated that CDR grantees placed a strong emphasis on academics and college preparation. This strong academic focus included tutoring services, dual-credit courses, individual graduation/education plans, credit recovery, and professional development for teachers. Although weak economic conditions (and therefore a lack of paid jobs/internships) may have pushed some programs toward a more academic focus, no grantee staff indicated in the site visit interviews that such a tradeoff was made.

Program staff members were asked to describe any changes in student achievement during program implementation. Staff from all Cycle 1 grantee sites indicated that they had observed improved student grades, some noting that students worked harder and appeared to feel increasingly responsible for their achievement. A School of Excellence in Education staff member noted that approximately 90% of program students completing dual credit courses had received passing grades. It is possible that these improvements in grades were not manifested in TAKS results.

TAKS Achievement – Statistical Models

The data presented thus far allow for general descriptive comparisons in the patterns of TAKS performance among CDR students in relation to statewide performance. This section presents results from four statistical models that were used to evaluate CDR and its effect on participating Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 students, controlling for school-level and student-level factors. The first and second models examined the characteristics that predict *meeting standards* for the TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading achievement tests.[31] The third and fourth models examined the school-level and individual-level characteristics that predict *scale scores* on the TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading exams, after controlling for student exam scores in the previous year.[32] (Please see Appendix G for further details about the methodology and for detailed tables of results.) Table 5.10 presents a simplified summary of the results from all four models. Each predictor used in the analyses is presented, along

[31] The TAKS-Reading exam is administered to 9th graders while the TAKS English Language Arts (ELA) exam is administered to 10th graders and at the exit level. Both of these exams were combined in our analyses, and we use the term "reading" as shorthand for both examinations.

[32] More precisely, the evaluation team conducted a z-score transformation to determine relative improvement in academic performance.

with information about whether it was statistically significant and the direction of the relationship between the predictor and the outcome listed at the top of each column.

For the analyses that predicted meeting standards in TAKS-Math or TAKS-Reading, odds ratios are presented to give the reader information about the strength of the relationship between each predictor and each outcome. Intuitively speaking, odds ratios describe how many times more (or less) a given group is likely to meet standards in TAKS-Math/TAKS-Reading than the other comparison group, and the larger the odds ratio is, the stronger the relationship is between a given variable and the outcome in question. For example, Table 5.8 indicates that CDR students who met TAKS-Math standards at baseline were 7.2 times more likely to meet TAKS-Math standards at the end of year 1, relative to those who did not pass TAKS at baseline. Conversely, CDR students who were identified as at risk of dropping out were 0.4 times (less than half) as likely to pass TAKS-Math as CDR students who were not at risk.

Table 5.10:

Summary of Key Predictors of TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading Proficiency and Scale Scores

Predictor	Model 1: TAKS-Math, Met Standards		Model 2: TAKS-Reading, Met Standards		Model 3: TAKS-Math, Scale Scores		Model 4: TAKS-Reading, Scale Scores	
	Statistically Significant	Odds Ratio	Statistically Significant	Odds Ratio	Statistically Significant	Coefficient	Statistically Significant	Coefficient
Baseline score	+	7.2	+	8.1	+	0.68	+	0.51
Grade 10 (vs. Grade 9)	ns	1.1	-	0.7	-	-0.23	-	-0.13
Grade 11 (vs. Grade 9)	+	7.3	+	1.8	-	-0.15	ns	-0.04
Economically disadvantaged	ns	0.9	ns	1.0	ns	-0.03	ns	-0.02
At risk	-	0.4	-	0.3	-	-0.21	-	-0.26
Female (vs. male)	ns	0.9	+	1.7	ns	-0.01	+	0.08
African-American (vs. Hispanic)	ns	0.9	ns	1.0	-	-0.08	-	-0.08
White (vs. Hispanic)	+	1.8	+	2.8	+	0.09	+	0.19
Special education status	-	0.2	-	0.3	-	-0.23	-	-0.36
Hours of service	ns	1.0	ns	1.0	-	-0.01	ns	0.00
Program absences	ns	1.0	ns	1.0	ns	0.00	-	0.00
School Level: Charter school	ns	2.5	ns	0.9	+	0.24	ns	-0.04
School Level: Rural school (vs. urban)	ns	1.6	ns	1.3	ns	0.00	ns	-0.06
School Level: Suburban school (vs. urban)	ns	1.0	ns	1.0	ns	-0.03	ns	-0.06

Source: PEIMS and TAKS data, 2007–08 through 2009–10

Note: += Statistically significant positive effects, holding other variables constant; - = Statistically significant negative effects, holding other variables constant; ns = Not statistically significant

Note: The math sample included 2,052 subjects from 39 schools. The reading sample included 2,160 subjects from 41 schools.

TAKS Achievement Standard (Models 1 and 2)

Changes in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading between baseline and the first year of service were explored in order to assess which characteristics best predicted CDR student achievement (i.e., met the TAKS passing standard). Hierarchical generalized linear modeling (HGLM) was used to control for student- and school-level factors in the TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math analyses. Model 1 and Model 2 in Table 5.10 present HGLM results for TAKS-Math proficiency and TAKS-Reading proficiency, respectively.

For TAKS-Math achievement, there were five significant student-level predictors and no significant school-level predictors of meeting the TAKS-Math standard. Students who met TAKS-Math standards at baseline, students in grade 11, and white students were more likely to pass TAKS-Math standards, while at-risk and special education students were less likely to pass TAKS-Math.

For TAKS-Reading achievement, there were seven significant student-level predictors of passing the TAKS-Reading standard. Students in special education were significantly less likely to pass the TAKS-Reading standard compared to other students, as were at-risk students and students in Grade 10. Students who passed TAKS-Reading standards at baseline, Grade 11 students, female students, and white students were more likely to pass TAKS-Reading standards.

TAKS Achievement Scale Scores (Models 3 and 4)

TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading scale scores were examined for all CDR students who participated in either Cycle 1 or Cycle 2 of CDR in order to assess which characteristics best predicted academic achievement (Models 3 and 4 in Table 5.10). Scale scores are simply examination scores that are transformed from raw data that allow the direct comparison of one examination form to the other. For TAKS analyses, the use of scale scores provides a more sensitive basis of comparison than proficiency rates. That is, the proficiency analyses (Models 1 and 2) only note whether a student has met a passing standard on a given TAKS exam, while these analyses (Models 3 and 4) examine subtle changes in TAKS performance, even if those changes don't make a difference as to whether a student passes or not. Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was used in the analysis of scale scores to control for student- and school-level factors. Because TAKS scale scores, used for the HLM analysis, were not comparable across different grade levels (i.e., they are not vertically equated), they were transformed to z-scores with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1 within each subject and grade level (standardized). (See Appendix G for detailed results.)

Table 5.10 provides information regarding both the statistical significance of given covariates and the HLM coefficient. (The more the coefficient deviates from zero, the stronger predictive value it has.) For TAKS-Math achievement, there were eight significant student-level predictors of TAKS-Math performance and one significant school-level predictor, as measured by standardized scale scores. Students in Grade 10 and Grade 11 were significantly less likely to score as high on their TAKS-Math exam scores than Grade 9 students, when student and school factors (including prior year performance) were controlled. Special education students and at-risk students were significantly less likely to score as well as other students on the TAKS-Math exam, while students who scored highly on the TAKS-Math exam in the previous school year were significantly more likely to score highly on the TAKS-Math exam the following year. Other student-level predictors found to be significant include African-American students (lower TAKS-Math scores relative to Hispanic students) and white students (significantly higher TAKS-Math scores relative to Hispanic students). Finally, participating in more hours of CDR service was associated with lower TAKS-Math scores. One possible explanation for why hours of service were negatively related to outcomes is that services may have been channeled to the students who were struggling the most in school. This does not imply that services were ineffective. One school-level predictor – charter school enrollment – was found to be related to significantly higher TAKS-Math scale scores than school district campus enrollment. However, differences in CDR student achievement in TAKS-Reading did not differ by charter school versus school district campus enrollment.

For TAKS-Reading achievement, there were eight significant student-level predictors of performance on the TAKS-Reading exam. Controlling for student and school factors, Grade 10 students, at-risk students, African-American students, and special education students scored lower on TAKS-Reading than other students. Students who scored highly on the TAKS-Reading exam in the previous school year were significantly more likely to score highly on the TAKS-Reading exam the following year, as were female and white students. Moreover, a higher number of absences from CDR activities was a significant predictor of lower TAKS-Reading performance. There were no significant school-level predictors of achievement in TAKS-Reading.

Overview of Results from Statistical Models

Across subjects and analyses, factors that were found most likely to predict success on TAKS appeared to be the following:

- Performance the previous year. Better academic performance at baseline predicted stronger results the following year.
- On all measures of TAKS performance, at-risk students did not perform as well as students who were not at risk. While CDR is intended to target at-risk students, they are less likely to be successful than participating students who were not at risk.
- White students had stronger performance on all measures of TAKS performance than Hispanic students.
- Special education students fared worse on all measures of TAKS performance than students not in special education.
- Female students had consistently stronger performance on TAKS-Reading than male students.

In short, CDR was most effective among the students who entered the program with the fewest pre-existing risk factors. The implication is that it may simply take a longer time to improve a student's academic performance when presenting problems or risk factors are more acute. These findings provide context for results, and a better understanding of which students may need extra assistance. These findings may also require us to rethink the relationship between services provided and outcomes. Students receiving more service hours than others are likely being given those services because they are falling behind. While this relationship may seem to be negative (i.e., the more services provided, the worse the results), it may actually be a positive demonstration that services are going to precisely those students who need them the most.

School-Level Quasi-Experimental Study Results

A school-level quasi-experimental study was conducted to compare CDR campuses to non-CDR campuses in order to determine what would have happened in the absence of CDR. Outcomes measured include school-level graduation rates, dropout rates (annual and longitudinal), completion I rates, completion II rates[33], TAKS-Reading, and TAKS-Math scores. For this study, the evaluation team compared 11 Cycle 1 CDR schools and 26 Cycle 2 CDR schools to a matched comparison group of schools that did not implement CDR.

Two Cycle 1 schools from Port Arthur were excluded from the matching procedure because they did not implement CDR as expected in the 2007–08 school year (due to Hurricane Ike). Two other Cycle 1 CDR schools were not matched: Reach Charter (Houston ISD) and Rick Hawkins High School (School of Excellence in Education). Reach Charter was excluded from the matching because it had no 2007–08 campus achievement data. There was not a sufficiently close match for Rick Hawkins High School on all matching variables. Schools were matched on the following variables at baseline (2007–08 school year): (1) percentage of students at the

[33] Completion I rates reflect the percentage of students in a cohort who graduate or continue in school, while completion II rates include graduates, continuers, and GED recipients.

school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, (2) racial/ethnic composition of the student body, (3) percentage of special education students in the school, (4) percentage of ELL students in the school, (5) percentage of at-risk students, (6) instructional program (Regular, Alternative, DAEP), (7) charter status [i.e., charter, not a charter school], (8) urbanicity [rural, suburban, urban], and (9) school enrollment. Comparisons were then made in school-level findings at the end of one year of CDR implementation (i.e., the 2008–09 school year). This matching process was replicated for Cycle 2 CDR schools, using the 2008–09 school year as the baseline, and then comparing outcomes between CDR and non-CDR schools on 2009–10 data.

Because graduation, completion, TAKS, and dropout outcomes were not used as matching variables, there are some discrepancies in baseline performance between CDR schools and their comparison schools. Cycle 1 CDR schools had slightly lower TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math proficiency rates at baseline than their comparison schools, while Cycle 2 CDR schools had slightly higher proficiency rates on both tests. Baseline differences in graduation, completion, and dropout rates are more pronounced. In fact, all baseline differences between CDR and comparison schools in graduation, completion, and dropout rates are statistically significant[34], which suggests that the variables that were used in the matching process produced comparison schools that were different from CDR schools; however, because of the unique eligibility requirements of CDR (i.e., at least 75% of students in the district had to be economically disadvantaged and at least 50% of students had to be at risk) the evaluation team prioritized these variables in the matching process. Because of the unique conditions present in CDR districts, it may be difficult to provide a fair basis of comparison no matter which variables are used in the matching process. Although these differences may at first appear to call into question the validity of the results, these baseline differences were taken into account in the analyses.

For Cycle 1, data were available for the 2008-09 school year on graduation rates, completion rates (I and II), annual dropout rates, four-year (longitudinal) dropout rates, TAKS-Reading passing rates, and TAKS-Math passing rates. The only school-level data available for the 2009–10 school year were TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading proficiency; therefore, Cycle 2 analyses were limited to TAKS performance only. Results are limited given that CDR may only serve a small percentage of students within a given school (whereas this analysis uses campus-level outcome variables), and that other broad school-based reforms are not controlled for in this analysis.

Unfortunately, the small sample size (i.e., 11 schools in each group for Cycle 1 and 26 schools in each group for Cycle 2) limits the statistical power of these results (i.e., it limits the ability to produce statistically significant findings). None of the differences between CDR schools and their comparison schools was found to be statistically significant. However, in terms of sheer rates, Cycle 1 CDR schools outperformed their comparison schools between 2007–08 (baseline) and 2008–09 (after the first year of implementation) on most major outcomes of interest, including graduation, completion I, completion II, longitudinal dropout rates, annual dropout rates, and TAKS-Reading (Table 5.11). Changes in TAKS-Math proficiency rates were more favorable for the comparison group (+6.5% between 2007–08 and 2008–09) than the CDR group (+5.3 percentage points). However, after two years of CDR implementation, improvements in TAKS-Math proficiency rates were stronger for the CDR group (+15 percentage points) than for the comparison group (+12 percentage points). Moreover, the CDR group had stronger gains in TAKS-Reading proficiency in the second year of implementation relative to their comparison group than in the first year. Two-year TAKS-Reading proficiency rates improved 8 percentage points for the CDR group and 3 percentage points for the comparison group. The most noteworthy outcome among these findings is that graduation rates improved 5% in Cycle 1 CDR schools, and 1% in comparison schools.

[34] Independent group t-tests based on pretest means and standard deviations presented in Table 5.11 indicated that statistically significant baseline differences between Cycle 1 schools and their comparison schools on graduation, completion I, completion II, annual dropout, and longitudinal dropout ($p<.05$).

Cycle 2 CDR schools, which were in their first year of CDR implementation, experienced lower rates of improvement relative to their comparison sites in both TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading proficiency between 2008–09 and 2009–10. TAKS-Reading proficiency rates improved by 2 percentage points in CDR schools and 3 percentage points in comparison schools between baseline and the end of the first year of implementation. This difference was marginal. During the same period, TAKS-Math proficiency rates improved by 6 percentage points in CDR schools and by 11 percentage points among comparison schools. Again, none of these differences between Cycle 2 CDR schools and their comparison group was statistically significant, perhaps because of the small sample size at the school level (*n*=26 CDR schools).

Table 5.11:

CDR versus Comparison Group School-Level Results

	Group	Pre (SD)	Post 1 (SD)	Post 2 (SD)	Difference from Baseline to First Year of CDR
Graduation (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	65.3% (10.4)	70.0% (11.9)	NA	+4.7%
	Comparison Schools	80.2% (7.9)	80.9% (7.6)	NA	+0.7%
Completion I (graduates, continuers) (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	80.5% (7.4)	83.9% (9.8)	NA	+3.4%
	Comparison Schools	89.5% (5.5)	90.4% (4.8)	NA	+0.9%
Completion II (graduates, continuers, GED) (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	81.8% (7.9)	85.1% (10.3)	NA	+3.3%
	Comparison Schools	90.3% (5.1)	91.1% (4.6)	NA	+0.8%
Annual Dropout (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	3.7% (1.7)	2.8% (1.9)	NA	-0.9%
	Comparison Schools	2.2% (1.4)	2.5% (1.5)	NA	+0.3%
Longitudinal Dropout (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	18.2% (7.8)	14.9% (10.3)	NA	-3.3%
	Comparison Schools	9.7% (5.1)	8.9% (4.6)	NA	-0.8%
TAKS-Reading: Met Standards (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	79.7% (7.6)	84.5% (6.3)	88.0% (4.0)	+4.8%
	Comparison Schools	82.4% (6.3)	86.0% (5.3)	85.2% (6.1)	+3.6%
TAKS-Math: Met Standards (Cycle 1)	CDR Schools	58.1% (13.0)	63.4% (14.1)	73.1% (5.3)	+5.3%
	Comparison Schools	59.0% (7.8)	65.5% (8.4)	70.8% (11.6)	+6.5%
TAKS-Reading: Met Standards (Cycle 2)	CDR Schools	85.2% (7.4)	86.8% (8.1)	NA	+1.6%
	Comparison Schools	84.2% (6.0)	87.2% (5.1)	NA	+3.0%
TAKS-Math: Met Standards (Cycle 2)	CDR Schools	61.7% (11.6)	67.5% (14.2)	NA	+5.8%
	Comparison Schools	56.7% (14.9)	67.7% (13.3)	NA	+11.0%

Source: PEIMS school-level data. SD=standard deviation

Note: For Cycle 1 schools, Pre=2007–08, Post 1=2008–09, Post 2=2009–10; For Cycle 2, Pre=2008–09 and Post 1=2009–10

Note: For Cycle 1: *n*=11 CDR schools and 11 comparison schools; For Cycle 2: *n*=26 CDR schools and 26 comparison schools.

Dropout, Graduation, Retention, and Promotion

The quasi-experimental study was conducted to determine the effect of CDR on school-level dropout and graduation outcomes (among others) relative to a comparison group. The evaluation team also was able to analyze student-level dropout, graduation, retention, and promotion data for the first cohort of students

served by Cycle 1 CDR grantees (*n*=955); however, no comparison group was available for this analysis. The data presented in Table 5.12 are not inclusive of the status of all CDR participating students because some students leave the district for other reasons besides dropping out or graduating (e.g., relocating to another district).

Grade promotion and retention data were available for the transition between the 2008–09 school year to the 2009–10 school year. Graduation data were available for the 2008–09 school year (class of 2009). Dropout data were available for 2008–09 school year, and not for 2009–10 because of the one-year lag in dropout data availability. Because the data represent what happened at the end of the 2008–09 school year, only findings related to students served in the 2008–09 school year (Cycle 1, Year 1) are presented.

Altogether, 160 of the 230 high school seniors served by CDR in 2008–09 graduated in 2009, which represented a graduation rate of 76%.[35] This graduation rate was slightly above district-wide averages (class of 2008) for five of the six Cycle 1 CDR districts. Los Fresnos was the exception; this CDR district had a higher graduation rate: 83%. CDR also graduated 60 underclassmen in the 2008–09 school year: 53 Grade 11 students and seven Grade 10 students. The majority of these students (38 Grade 11 and three Grade 10 students) were from Brownsville and took part in credit recovery and other academic services.

The annual dropout rate among CDR students was 7.9% for the 2008–09 school year, which was above district-wide averages at all six Cycle 1 CDR grantees. Annual district-wide dropout rates for the 2007–08 school year ranged from 2% in Los Fresnos to 5% in Houston; in 2008–09, annual dropout rates ranged from 1% in Los Fresnos to 6% in Edgewood. It is unclear why CDR students had such a high annual dropout rate. One possibility is that CDR grantees targeted the most at-risk students within the school, so they would be expected to have higher dropout rates.

Table 5.12 also contains descriptive data on grade promotion and retention. Grade promotion and retention data were available for the transition between the 2008–09 school year to the 2009–10 school year. Overall, Grade 9 had the highest proportion of students retained, with a retention rate of 32%. Students in Grade 12 by definition could not be promoted to the next grade level (i.e., graduation is the next step), and 27 CDR students were retained in their senior year. The data in Table 5.12 should be interpreted with caution, given that the status of 174 students is missing or unknown.

[35] More students may have graduated after statistics were made available by TEA.

Table 5.12:

Summary of Dropout, Graduation, Promotion, and Retention Results, by Grade for Cycle 1 CDR Students, 2008–09 Data

	n	Graduated	Graduation Rate	Dropped Out	Dropout Rate	Promoted	Promotion Rate	Retained	Retention Rate
Grade 9	182	0	0.0%	11	6.0%	112	61.5%	59	32.4%
Grade 10	196	7	3.6%	18	9.2%	148	75.6%	23	11.7%
Grade 11	193	53	27.5%	10	5.2%	109	56.5%	21	10.9%
Grade 12	210	160	76.2%	23	11.0%	n/a*	n/a*	27	12.9%
Total	**781**	**220**	**N/A**	**62**	**7.9%**	**369**	**47.2%**	**130**	**16.6%**

Source: PEIMS, 2008–09 data; n=781; data for 174 students is missing because 66 students left the district, PEIMS data were missing for 93 students, and 15 students had inconclusive data (e.g., students were enrolled in Grade 12 in 2008–09 but appear as Grade 11 students the following year).
* Students in Grade 12 by definition could not be promoted to the next level.

College Readiness

To determine college readiness of CDR students, the evaluation team analyzed student-level TAKS data from (1) Cycle 1 CDR students who took the TAKS Exit-Level Exam in the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years, and (2) Cycle 2 CDR students who took the TAKS Exit Level exam during the 2009–10 school year. Table 5.13 presents results from both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 students who took the TAKS Exit Level exam and achieved a scale score of 2200 or above, which is the Higher Education Readiness Component (HERC) indicator used by TEA. The evaluation team did not examine TAKS commended performance (i.e., TAKS scale scores of 2400 and above) because very few CDR students attained that level of distinction.

Rates of college readiness among CDR students were higher among Cycle 2 students than Cycle 1 students, and higher in reading than in math. Slightly under half (45%) of Cycle 2 students met or exceeded the HERC college-ready standards in math, while over two-thirds (68%) of Cycle 2 students met or exceeded the HERC college-ready standards in reading. Moreover, 42% of Cycle 2 students met HERC college-ready standards in both subjects. By contrast, roughly one-third (31%) of Cycle 1 students were college-ready in math and slightly under half (49%) were college-ready in reading. About a quarter of Cycle 1 students (26%) were college-ready in both subjects. At least part of this discrepancy in academic performance between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 students may be explained by the higher-risk environments that were served by Cycle 1 grantees (as outlined in Section 4).

Table 5.13:

College Readiness Results, by Grade for CDR Students

	TAKS Exit-Level Exam, Math		TAKS Exit-Level Exam, Reading		TAKS Exit-Level Exam, Both Subjects	
	N	College Ready	N	College Ready	N	College Ready
Cycle 1	242	75 (31.0%)	258	125 (48.5%)	231	59 (25.5%)
Cycle 2	581	263 (45.3%)	581	395 (68.0%)	561	238 (42.4%)

Source: 2009-10 TAKS data

Course Completion

Course completion data were available for the majority of the high school students enrolled in CDR Cycle 1 during the 2008–09 school year. Table 5.14 shows the percentage of CDR students who passed three math courses – Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and Geometry – in 2007–08 and 2008–09. Also shown are the percentage of students who failed each course and the percentage of students who did not pass the course on their first attempt but eventually succeeded in the same school year (mixed pass). Because different students took given subjects each year – and because the timing of courses may be related to academic performance (i.e., CDR students taking geometry in 2008–09 may be on a different academic track than students who took the course a year earlier) – the results are intended to be descriptive. No tests of statistical inference were conducted on these data.

In 2008–09, 52% of the CDR students who attempted Algebra 1 passed Algebra 1, compared to 49% in 2007–08. Moreover, fewer CDR students failed Algebra 1 on their first attempt (34% in 2008–09 vs. 45% in 2007–08). The most notable improvements in course completion were reported for Algebra II. Passing rates improved 14 percentage points, from 42% in 2007–08 to 56% in 2008–09 and failure rates also dropped 18 percentage points. Rates of passing Geometry courses also increased slightly, and failure rates declined by 14 percentage points, from 44% in 2007–08 to 30% in 2008–09. Across the board, CDR students improved passing rates in math, reduced failure rates, and improved their rates of success on the second attempt in passing a course. Despite these positive movements, it is evident from the passing rates that almost half of CDR students still faced challenges in passing these courses, which are considered critical for college and career readiness.

Table 5.14:

Summary of Course Completion Results for Mathematics for Cycle 1 CDR Students, 2007–08 Data

		2007–08 School Year		2008–09 School Year	
		N	%	N	%
Algebra I	Passed	115	49%	143	52%
	Failed	125	45%	95	34%
	Mixed Passed	15	6%	40	15%
Algebra II	Passed	92	42%	106	56%
	Failed	109	50%	62	32%
	Mixed Passed	16	8%	23	12%
Geometry	Passed	115	53%	105	55%
	Failed	91	44%	58	30%
	Mixed Passed	8	3%	29	15%

Source: PEIMS Course Completion, 2007–08 & 2008–09 data

Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

The same pattern held for courses in English (Table 5.15). Across English I, II, and III, student participants increased passing rates and decreased failure rates from 2007–08 to 2009–10. CDR students were also more successful on their second attempt in passing English I (+7 percentage points) and English III (+4 percentage points). Rates of success in passing English II on the second attempt held steady at 9%.

These patterns in course completion indicated that CDR students were progressing in school at a faster rate in their first year of the program, which may help them to be college and career ready. The strong academic focus of many CDR programs may explain these patterns; however, the reader should exercise caution in interpreting these results since these findings are not based on a comparison group. In other words, it cannot be determined what would have happened in the absence of CDR.

Table 5.15:

Summary of Course Completion Results for Reading for Cycle 1 CDR Students, 2008–09 Data

		2007–08 School Year		2008–09 School Year	
		N	%	N	%
English I	Passed	109	53%	132	61%
	Failed	83	40%	54	25%
	Mixed Passed	15	7%	30	14%
English II	Passed	130	56%	160	68%
	Failed	82	35%	54	23%
	Mixed Passed	21	9%	22	9%
English III	Passed	157	62%	144	66%
	Failed	76	31%	50	23%
	Mixed Passed	17	7%	26	11%

Source: PEIMS Course Completion, 2007–08 & 2008–09 data
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Student Self-Perception of Career Readiness

Besides TAKS and other student outcomes previously reviewed, four other measures of career readiness were assessed as part of this evaluation: (1) students' technical knowledge, (2) ethical workplace behaviors, (3) leadership skills, and (4) oral and written communications skills. To evaluate these measures, the team drew from data collected through case studies and the Student Survey. Because the overall response rates from the Student Survey were low (27% in 2008–09 and 18% in 2009–10), these surveys' respondents may not be representative of CDR as a whole. Still, these findings were instructive and provided important context for evaluation findings. First, however, a brief summary of CDR students who were provided workforce readiness and employment services is provided.

Student Participation in Employment and Internships/ Apprenticeships

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees reported data for the evaluation about specific elements of their program through progress reports submitted to TEA. While these data vary slightly from the student upload data because of the timing of the data collection, they are particularly useful in understanding the extent to which students were engaged in paid or unpaid employment or internships.

As of May 31, 2010, 19 of the 22 Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR grantees reported that 4,100 students had participated in CDR grant program activities in the 2009-10 school year (Table 5.16). Overall, 14 of the 19 grantees who completed progress reports (74%) indicated that between 90% and 100% of the participating students were identified as being at risk for dropping out of school. Only 8% of the students served by these 19 grantees were in paid employment and/or paid/unpaid internships or apprenticeships. This breaks down to 4% of students in paid employment, 3% of students in unpaid internships/apprenticeships, and 1% of students in paid internships/apprenticeships. Although these percentages appear to be small, 330 CDR students did receive an opportunity for employment that they may not have had otherwise.

Table 5.16:

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Services Received: Student Participants Who Have Participated in Employment and/or Internships/ Apprenticeships (2009-10 school year through May 31, 2010)

Type of Service	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants
Students served by the program receiving Workforce Skills Development Services	1436	35%
Students served by the program who are in paid employment and/or paid/unpaid internship/apprenticeship	330	8%
*Students served by the program who have obtained **paid employment***	*164*	*4%*
*Students served by the program who are in an **unpaid internship/apprenticeship***	*122*	*3%*
*Students served by the program who are in a **paid internship/apprenticeship***	*44*	*1%*

Source: June 2010 CDR Grantee Progress Reports (19 of 22 Cycle 1 and 2 grantees reporting); n=4,100 students

Students' Technical Knowledge

Staff from the case study sites in both cycles (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2) and both years (2008–09 and 2009–10) reported that their programs offered ample opportunities for students to improve their technological literacy, including software training courses and online program components. However, staff interviewed during CDR site visits had difficulty identifying clear indicators of enhanced technological knowledge or skills. A notable exception was that students from the Brownsville site were reportedly more proficient in computer skills than had been expected: The site's university partner reported that they modified their computer curriculum because participating students had more knowledge and experience than they had anticipated.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Table 5.17 includes CDR students' self-reported positive workplace behaviors from both the 2009 student survey (Cycle 1 only) and the 2010 student survey (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2). Although there were no baseline data to determine how much these behaviors changed, they were nonetheless an interesting snapshot of how students in CDR behaved in the workplace. About 65% of CDR students who responded to the survey had a job in the month prior to the survey's administration in the spring of each year. In the table, each positive behavior is followed by the number of times these working students had engaged in that behavior in the past month. With the exception of "scheduling meetings with my boss to assess my progress on the job", more than half of CDR students who were employed engaged in each type of positive behavior at least once in the past month.

Table 5.17:

CDR Students' Self-Reported Positive Workplace Ethics in the Previous Month

Statement	Never	1-3 Times	4-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times
Volunteered for extra work	28.3%	47.2%	17.5%	3.9%	3.3%
Stayed late to work on a task that really needed to be done	21.2%	51.8%	18.2%	4.0%	4.9%
On my own initiative, I learned how to do something to help my company	33.7%	45.7%	15.0%	3.6%	2.2%
Worked overtime for my company, even when I was not scheduled to work	40.4%	33.8%	15.1%	5.7%	5.1%
Scheduled meetings with my boss to assess my progress in my job	58.6%	32.3%	6.6%	1.9%	0.6%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2009 and 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Note: Approximately 35% of the 1,162 respondents did not work in the month prior to survey administration; therefore the percentages in the table represent responses from students who did work.

The program component designed to inculcate ethical work behaviors was, according to at least one site coordinator, the weakest aspect of that site's overall program. However, staff from all five case study sites noted that students were attending more closely to the relationship between their appearance (i.e., clothing, tattoos, etc.) and the ways in which others perceived them. Staff from Edgewood and Brownsville reported either that they had observed appropriate behaviors or that they had received no complaints about student behavior.

Table 5.18 includes a list of negative workplace behaviors and student responses to how many times they engaged in the listed behavior in the past month. Of the students who were employed, over two-thirds reported that they never engaged in each negative behavior in the past month, and when students did report negative workplace behaviors, they tended to be infrequent (or isolated) incidents. The negative behavior most prevalent was intentionally arriving late to work: among students who were employed in the past month, about one in four CDR students arrived late at least once.

Table 5.18:

CDR Students' Self-Reported Negative Workplace Ethics

Statement	Never	1-3 Times	4-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times
Intentionally arrived late for work	73.0%	22.6%	3.6%	0.3%	0.6%
Called in sick when I was not really sick	80.7%	16.2%	1.9%	0.9%	0.3%
Bent the rules in dealing with someone (e.g., gave friend employee discount)	76.5%	16.8%	4.2%	1.2%	1.2%
Left work early without permission	89.5%	8.5%	0.3%	0.3%	1.2%
Played games on the computer during work hours	87.5%	8.5%	2.5%	0.0%	1.5%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2009 and 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Note: Approximately 35% of the 1,162respondents did not work in the month prior to survey administration; therefore the percentages in the table represent responses from students who did work.

Students' Leadership Skills

CDR program staff indicated that student leadership skills were emerging among some participating students. For example, an Edgewood staff member reported that a student took responsibility for organizing a clothing drive for needy families. Students at CDR sites were offered opportunities to enhance their leadership experiences and skills. Through Houston ISD's student tutoring program, for instance, students were provided ongoing opportunities to serve as responsible role models for the elementary students they tutored. At a Brownsville alternative high school, staff reported that students were organized into "platoons," leadership for which was rotated so that each student assumed responsibility for the group at some point throughout the academic year.

Additionally, the program implemented by Houston ISD appeared to have produced an unanticipated outcome in the leadership domain. A student tutoring program, the Houston ISD effort hired students at risk of dropping out to tutor elementary school pupils. Student tutors received pedagogical training and support, maintained a journal about their experiences, and were evaluated regularly. In addition to assuming responsibility for tutoring younger children, the student tutors received payment for their services and were able to contribute financially to their families, many of whom were low income. Thus, the unanticipated outcome was that participating student tutors contributed materially to their families' well-being, and this responsibility was perceived to contribute to leadership skills.

Students' Oral and Written Communication Skills

Reports of improved student oral and written communication skills varied across the case study sites. Oral communication had improved at the Houston ISD site, according to staff, whereas staff at the School of

Excellence in Education reported that student writing skills were stronger. Staff of Los Fresnos said that previously reticent students were far more verbal, confident, and even "professional" in their presentation. Staff of Brownsville reported that improvements in student communication were noticeable, but those of Edgewood indicated that improvements were modest. Almost half of CDR students (49%) indicated in the student survey that the program has helped them at least "quite a bit" in developing their writing skills – and more than half of respondents (55%) indicated that CDR has helped them at least "quite a bit" in speaking effectively.

Other Outcomes

CDR Students' Experiences in the Program

Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR students were asked directly about their experiences with the program and whether they considered it to be effective (1,162 students responded to the survey, including 249 students in 2009 [response rate: 27%] and 913 students in 2010 [response rate: 18%]).[36] Table 5.19 presents a list of potential outcomes of CDR that, collectively, were indicative of whether students were college and career ready. Respondents to the CDR student survey indicated that attending class regularly, preparing for college, working well with others, and learning on one's own were the areas where CDR provided the most help. Areas where CDR was perceived by students as being least effective included: making the community a better place, writing effectively, and learning work-related skills. With the exception of "making the community a better place", at least 80% of CDR students thought that the program was helping them. This was a positive indication that CDR was making a difference with students. Additional comments from the CDR student survey are presented in Appendix H.[37]

[36] Due to provisions with the confidentiality of student records, the evaluation team was not able to link the names of students to their student records. The team therefore was unable to conduct a nonresponse analysis to determine whether students who responded to the student survey differed substantially from students who did not respond.

[37] Student comments were not edited for spelling or grammar.

Table 5.19:

CDR Students' Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

How Much CDR Has Contributed To…	Very Little	Some	Quite a Bit	Very Much
Attending class regularly	7.3%	21.5%	26.3%	44.9%
Preparing for college	10.8%	26.2%	25.8%	37.2%
Learning on your own	9.1%	26.8%	29.9%	34.1%
Using computers and/or other technology	11.9%	28.6%	27.7%	31.8%
Thinking critically	10.0%	30.8%	31.4%	27.8%
Developing career goals	9.2%	29.8%	28.3%	32.7%
Working well with others	9.6%	28.9%	28.1%	33.3%
Learning leadership skills	10.7%	32.0%	27.3%	30.0%
Developing personal values	10.7%	31.4%	28.4%	29.5%
Solving real-world problems	13.8%	30.4%	28.4%	27.4%
Speaking effectively	12.4%	33.0%	29.1%	25.4%
Making your community a better place	24.2%	33.4%	21.9%	20.5%
Learning work-related skills	13.5%	36.0%	28.3%	22.2%
Writing effectively	16.5%	34.2%	29.2%	20.1%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Future Plans/Aspirations

Another measure of CDR's success was whether students have aspirations to participate in higher education (Table 5.20). Most CDR programs offer dual-credit courses with local colleges and universities, and part of the purpose of these programs is to provide students with a window to the college experience in the hope that students will aspire for higher education. It is evident that CDR students had high educational aspirations. Nearly three out of four CDR students indicated that they plan to attend college after graduating from high school, and slightly less than half of respondents were planning to attend a four-year college. About 10% of students planned to go straight into the workforce following high school.

Table 5.20:

CDR Students' Plans After Graduating from High School

Plans	n	%
4-Year College or University	565	48.8%
2-Year College or University	287	24.8%
Work	108	9.3%
Military	88	7.6%
Apprenticeship	2	0.2%
Time Off	9	0.8%
Undecided	58	5.0%
Other	67	5.8%
Total	1,162	100%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2009 (Cycle 1) and 2010 (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2)
Note: Percentages add up to more than 100% because some students entered multiple plans for the future in the "other" category.

Interview data from the case studies likewise suggested that students were more interested in pursuing post-secondary education than they had appeared to prior to program involvement. Some program staff attributed this to CDR's focus on supporting financial aid application, college selection, and preparation—particularly for those students whose parents had not attended college themselves.

Student Engagement

CDR student survey results from 2009 (Cycle 1) and 2010 (Cycle 1 and Cycle 2) covering attitudes toward academics are presented in Table 5.21. These questions provided insight into students' perceptions of self-efficacy[38] and engagement in school, both of which have been found in other studies to predict academic success (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991; Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Results presented in the table indicate that CDR students had a good sense of self-efficacy, which may or may not be attributable to the presence of CDR. At least three in four students agreed that they have the skills and abilities to complete their work and they believe it is important to get good grades. Low student engagement appeared to be the greatest challenge, as less than one in five students strongly agreed that they are excited about their classes.

[38] Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capability to perform in circumstances that exercise influence over events in their lives.

Table 5.21:

CDR Students' Attitudes Toward Academics (Student Self-Efficacy and Engagement)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I think it is important to make good grades	3.2%	1.1%	6.5%	31.0%	58.2%
There is at least one adult in my school who cares about me and knows me well	5.0%	5.8%	17.0%	30.0%	42.2%
I think the things I learn at school are useful	3.8%	3.5%	18.6%	41.8%	32.3%
I have the skills and abilities to complete my work	2.8%	1.3%	10.1%	42.9%	42.9%
Overall, people at school accept me for who I am	3.8%	3.0%	18.8%	40.8%	33.7%
I care about my school	4.2%	4.9%	21.5%	39.1%	30.3%
I put forth a great deal of effort when doing my school work	2.8%	3.3%	21.9%	44.7%	27.3%
My school work makes me curious to learn about other things	3.9%	5.6%	23.9%	42.4%	24.2%
I have worked harder than I expected to work in school	2.9%	6.8%	26.2%	38.7%	25.4%
I have opportunities to be creative in my school assignments	3.3%	4.9%	23.5%	42.1%	26.2%
I feel safe in school	6.3%	7.1%	28.2%	38.5%	20.0%
I am challenged to do my best work at school	3.2%	3.8%	20.6%	47.3%	25.2%
In general, I am excited about my classes	4.5%	8.9%	38.9%	31.4%	16.3%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Table 5.22 presents other indicators of student engagement collected via the CDR Student Survey. In general, it appears that CDR students were engaged in class, as almost 90% of CDR students participated in class discussions, and over 90% of students at least occasionally asked questions during class and worked with other students during class. Over half of CDR students worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments, and more than half of survey respondents also indicated that they have tutored other students outside of class time.

Table 5.22:

CDR Students' Engagement in School

Statement	Not at All	Sometimes	Always
I completed my homework	6.5%	53.0%	40.5%
I worked with other students on assignments during class	6.4%	57.8%	35.8%
I asked questions in class	7.5%	59.1%	33.4%
I participated in class discussions	10.3%	59.9%	29.8%
I studied for tests/quizzes/ exams	13.1%	59.8%	27.1%
I worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments	30.2%	49.8%	19.9%
I helped/tutored other students who were in my class	37.4%	47.8%	14.7%
I skipped class	58.2%	36.2%	5.6%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Student Behaviors

Table 5.23 includes an overview of students' self-reported engagement in negative behaviors. Most negative behaviors were reported relatively infrequently, with the exception of cheating on a test/exam. Almost one-quarter of students admitted to cheating. Although CDR was designed in part to improve ethical behaviors, the program focuses on ethical workplace behaviors modeled to participating students through mentor relationships, job shadowing, and career workshops. It is unclear at this time whether this focus may also effect ethical classroom behavior. Almost one in five students reported that they have been suspended from school since joining CDR, and about one in seven students reported being in a physical altercation.

Table 5.23:

CDR Students' Self-Reported Behaviors Since Joining CDR (2008–09 School Year)

Statement	Never	1-3 Times	4-10 Times	11-20 Times	More than 20 Times
I cheated on a test or exam	76.2%	17.7%	3.2%	1.3%	1.6%
I received a school suspension	82.6%	14.4%	1.5%	0.7%	0.7%
I tried to hit or get into a physical fight with another person(s)	84.2%	12.2%	2.0%	0.6%	1.0%
I intentionally damaged private property	94.0%	4.2%	1.1%	0.5%	0.3%
I shoplifted minor articles (e.g., cigarettes, magazines, clothes)	93.1%	5.1%	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%
I hid a firearm or knife on my person while outside my home	94.5%	3.1%	1.1%	0.6%	0.7%
I shoplifted major articles (e.g., over $100 in value)	96.2%	2.4%	0.6%	0.5%	0.2%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Table 5.24 reports how CDR students spend their time. Students were asked on the CDR Student Survey to indicate how many hours per week they spend on certain activities. Overall, CDR students reported dividing their time between school, work, and what appeared to be active social schedules. The largest amount of time spent by CDR students was on socializing with friends (5.1 hours per week), watching television (3.9 hours per week), and talking on the phone (3.8 hours per week). Students averaged three hours of work per week. Among the students who were employed (65%), work likely consumed a much larger percentage of their time.

Table 5.24:

Average Number of Hours per Week Spent by CDR Students on Selected Activities

Activity	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hanging Out/Socializing With Friends Outside of School	1,128	5.1	3.4
Watching Television	1,142	3.9	3.1
Talking on the Phone	1,146	3.8	3.5
Exercising	1,137	3.6	3.2
Chatting or Surfing Online	1,142	3.1	3.2
Working for Pay	1,127	3.8	3.9
Preparing for Class	1,147	3.1	2.7
Participating in School-Sponsored Activities	1,135	2.6	3.3
Doing Volunteer Work	1,145	1.9	2.7
Playing Video Games	1,140	1.7	2.6
Internship/Unpaid Work	1,128	1.4	2.5

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2010 (n=1,162)

CDR Students' Perceptions of Their Neighborhood

Cycle 1 students generally had a positive perception of their neighborhood (Table 5.25). Although less than half of respondents indicated that crime, substance abuse, vandalism, and run-down housing was "never a problem", less than 10% of students indicated that these problems were always present. It is unclear whether students simply become acclimated to their environment and accept problems as normal, or whether these issues are truly minor in CDR LEAs. Given the risk factors presented earlier on CDR LEAs (e.g., high percentage of students at risk, high levels of economic disadvantage), there is reason to believe it may be the former.

Table 5.25:

CDR Students' Perceptions of Their Neighborhood

Perception of Problems in Student's Neighborhood	Never a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem	Don't Know
Crime (muggings, robberies, etc.)	42.4%	28.2%	10.1%	9.0%	10.3%
People selling or using drugs	45.8%	15.9%	14.0%	8.2%	16.1%
People drinking alcohol in public	42.2%	22.5%	10.7%	11.8%	12.8%
Vandalism (e.g., graffiti, broken street lights)	47.5%	23.9%	10.7%	7.7%	10.3%
Housing and property not being kept up	49.9%	22.4%	13.9%	4.7%	9.1%

Source: CDR Student Survey, 2010 (n=1,162)
Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Summary of CDR Outcomes

This chapter examined the effects of CDR on students in terms of several important programmatic outcomes, including academic achievement, career readiness, and other reported outcomes including dropout, graduation, course completion, and promotion. In terms of academic achievement, CDR students had higher proficiency rates in TAKS-Math, TAKS-Reading, and TAKS-Science after being in the program for a year. CDR students' gains in proficiency outpaced state averages, and at-risk CDR students outpaced gains in state averages for at-risk students.

Additionally, students gave high ratings to CDR on preparing them for college, improving classroom attendance, increasing computer knowledge, and encouraging them to learn on their own and think critically. These student surveys were confirmed by interviews with key staff stakeholders who reported that students tended to get better grades, work harder, and feel an increased responsibility for their achievements due to CDR.

Students appeared to demonstrate stronger levels of career readiness. More than half of the surveyed students who were employed reported engaging in positive workplace behaviors in the past month (e.g., staying late to work on a task that really needed to be done). Conversely, more than two-thirds of the students reported that they did not engage in negative workplace behaviors in the past month (e.g., intentionally arriving late for work). Additionally, during site visits, program staff related stories about students taking an increased interest in improving their appearances at work (e.g., clothing, hiding tattoos, etc.), which could indicate students' increased interest in performing at work.

The school-level analysis, while a more rigorous test of CDR's effectiveness, was based on a small sample which limited the evaluation team's ability to draw statistically significant conclusions. Still, the data suggest that the 11 Cycle 1 CDR schools outperformed their 11 comparison schools on:

- annual dropout rates (net change: -1.2% in favor of CDR schools)
- longitudinal dropout rates (net change: -2.5% in favor of CDR schools)
- graduation rates (net change: +4.0% in favor of CDR schools)
- completion rate I (net change: +2.3% in favor of CDR schools)
- completion rate II (net change: +2.5% in favor of CDR schools)
- TAKS-Reading (net change: +1.2% in favor of CDR schools)

Although TAKS-Math findings were slightly negative for Cycle 1 CDR schools (net change: -1.2% in favor of the comparison group), these schools experienced substantial gains in TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math in the second year of implementation. Two-year net changes in proficiency rates favored CDR schools on both subjects.

In contrast, the 26 Cycle 2 CDR schools did not compare favorably to their comparison groups on both TAKS-Reading (net change: -1.4% in favor of the comparison group) and TAKS-Math (net change: -5.2% in favor of the comparison group). No other school-level outcomes were available for Cycle 2 CDR schools at the time of this writing; therefore, it may be too early to judge these results, especially given the tendency of both CDR students and schools to make substantial gains in the second year.

The results for CDR on both student-level and school-level outcomes were striking in their consistency. Nearly every outcome studied demonstrated either positive movement among CDR students, or positive change relative to a comparison group. While the magnitude of some changes were modest, the range of positive outcomes appear to indicate that CDR is having a positive effect on a number of aspects of students' lives.

6. Cost-Effectiveness and Sustainability of CDR

This section includes findings from the analysis of data on cost-effectiveness and sustainability of CDR (Evaluation Objective 4). Budgets and expenditures are reported for both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees. For Cycle 1 grantees, budgeted amounts and total expenditures in broad categories across the entire grant period were available. Only one year of expenditure data was available for Cycle 2 grantees at the time of this report. The data from only one year are even more limited because grantees are not required to draw down funds as they spend them. In other words, grantees make decisions about when to draw down their awarded funds as long as they draw down all funds by the final deadline established by TEA. Because of these limitations, the "cost per student" value presented for Cycle 2 grantees should be considered to be a preliminary estimate.

Eligible Use of Funds

For Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 of the CDR program, eligible LEAs were able to receive grants of up to $250,000 to implement their programs or initiatives. Grantees were required to serve a minimum of 20 students, and grant funds could be used for expenses in the budget categories of payroll, professional and contracted services, supplies and materials, other operating costs, and capital outlay. Specific allowable expenditures, specified in the CDR request for applications, included the following:

- Hiring a lead education staff member (coordinator) to provide guidance and outreach, and to serve as a liaison between schools and partners
- Funding extra duty pay for staff involved in after-school activities related to the purpose of the grant
- Purchasing equipment or materials necessary for student participation in an internship program or dropout reduction and recovery activities
- Providing incentives to students for completing an internship or employment program
- Providing students with nutritional snacks during after-school or weekend activities
- Transporting students to and from internships, employment programs, or collaborative activities
- Sponsoring educational field trips and college visits
- Matching costs of facilities provided by outside organizations for program use

Funds from the CDR grant could not be expended on certain program costs, including the salaries or extra duty pay of district or campus administrators; furniture; equipment, computers, or computer software not shown to be necessary for program implementation; debt service; or indirect costs.

The CDR grant required a 10% match from collaborating partners. This match could be in the form of in-kind donations or cash, and had to be made for allowable costs only from non-federal sources. If a match was not provided for the required amount or greater, TEA and the grantee reduced the total amount of grant funds available for the program (TEA, 2008b). Grant funds and matching funds are treated separately throughout the cost analysis.

Grantees in both cycles were required to complete a cost section in the grant application detailing how the funds would be budgeted. Each of the overall budget categories included several subcategories, which are outlined in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1:

Budget Categories and Corresponding Subcategories, Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Major Budget Category	Subcategory
Payroll Costs	Academic Direct Program Management/Administration Auxiliary & Other Substitute Pay Professional Staff Extra-Duty Pay Support Staff Extra Duty Pay Employee Benefits Tuition Remission (Allowable only for IHEs) Other
Professional and Contracted Services	Legal Services Professional/Consulting Services Staff or Student Tuition Education Service Center Services Contracted Maintenance and Repair of Equipment Utilities Rental/Lease Equipment Miscellaneous Contracted Services Other
Supplies and Materials	Maintenance and/or Operations, Supplies and Materials Textbooks and Other Reading Materials Testing Materials District Food Service General Supplies and Materials Hardware and Equipment Not Capitalized Other
Other Operating Costs	Travel and Subsistence Insurance Costs Student Incentives Miscellaneous Operating Costs Other
Capital Outlay	Equipment, Vehicles, or Software Capital Assets Library Books and Library Media (Catalogued and Controlled by Library) Other

Source: Texas Education Agency, CDR Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 Requests for Application (RFAs)

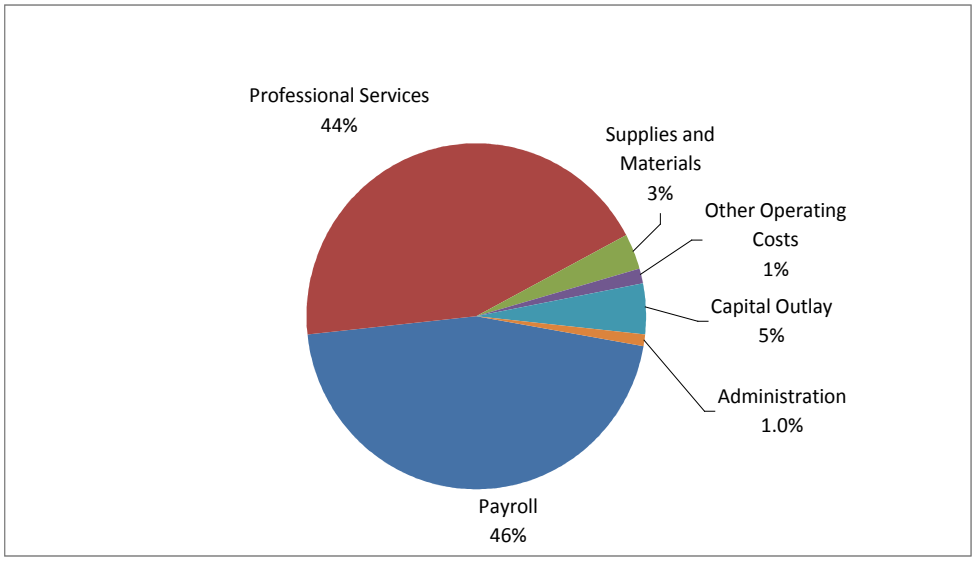
The six CDR Cycle 1 grantees were awarded an overall average total of $226,578, and the 16 CDR Cycle 2 grantees were awarded an overall average total of $241,631. These grant funds were awarded to and spent by grantees, while matching funds are reported separately. The following sections examine the total average costs of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 projects, comparing average project budgeted amounts to average expenditures, and comparing grant funds and matching funds.

Cycle 1 Awards, Budgets, and Expenditures

Total Costs – Cycle 1

Based on data submitted by the six Cycle 1 CDR grantees, an average of $168,939 from TEA was spent to cover the costs of their programs. Of the five major funding categories constituting grantees' budgets (Figure 6.1), the majority of the funds went toward payroll costs (an average of $76,927, or 46% of the total expenditures) and professional services (an average of $73,985, or 44% of the total expenditures). The rest of the funds were spent on supplies and materials (an average of $5,856, or 3% of the total expenditure), other operating costs (an average of $2,534, or 1% of the total expenditures), capital outlay (an average of $7,987, or 5% of the total expenditures), and administration costs (an average of $1,650, or 1% of the total expenditures).

Figure 6.1: Total Average Expenditures of Cycle 1 CDR Grantees (n=6)



Source: CDR Cycle 1 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

TEA was particularly interested in the use of student incentives, including food service during after-school and weekend activities. Only one CDR Cycle 1 grantee budgeted funds (in the amount of $6,000) for food service (which falls under supplies and materials), and throughout the entire grant cycle, the one grantee did not report spending any funds for food service. None of the CDR Cycle 1 grantees budgeted funds for student incentives, which fall under other operating costs.

Comparison of Budgeted Amounts and Expenditures – Cycle 1

Table 6.2 displays the detailed comparison of budgets and actual expenditures for CDR Cycle 1 grantees. These grantees were awarded, on average, a total of $226,578 to cover all program costs. Their actual program expenditures were roughly 75% of their award, at an average of $168,939 in overall expenditures. In terms of payroll costs, grantees budgeted an average of $107,951, but actually spent an average of $76,927 on payroll costs. This represents approximately 71% of the average budgeted amount for payroll costs. These grantees budgeted, on average, $77,112 to cover professional services; they spent, on average, $73,985, or 96%, of their budgeted amounts for these costs. Whereas grantees budgeted an average of $15,749 for supplies and materials, they spent $5,856 (or 37%) of the amount originally budgeted for supplies and materials. CDR Cycle 1 grantees budgeted an average of $17,754 for other operating costs, but actually spent $2,534, or 14% of the

originally budgeted amount. In terms of capital outlay, grantees allocated, on average, $8,012, and expended 100% for such costs.[39] In general, the CDR Cycle 1 grantees spent close to what they had originally budgeted, with two exceptions: Grantees spent much less on supplies and materials and other operating costs than the budgeted amounts.

Table 6.2:

Comparison of Average Program Budgets (Grant Funds) to Average Program Expenditures for CDR Cycle 1 Grantees

Category	Total Average Amount (Grant) (N=6)		
	Budgeted	Spent	% of Budget Spent
Payroll Costs	$107,951	$76,927	71%
Professional and Contracted Services	$77,112	$73,985	96%
Supplies and Materials	$15,749	$5,856	37%
Other Operating Costs	$17,754	$2,534	14%
Capital Outlay	$8,012	$7,987	100%
Administration Costs	-	$1,650	-
Total Costs:	$226,578	$168,939	75%

Source: CDR Cycle 1 Grant Applications; CDR Cycle 1 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

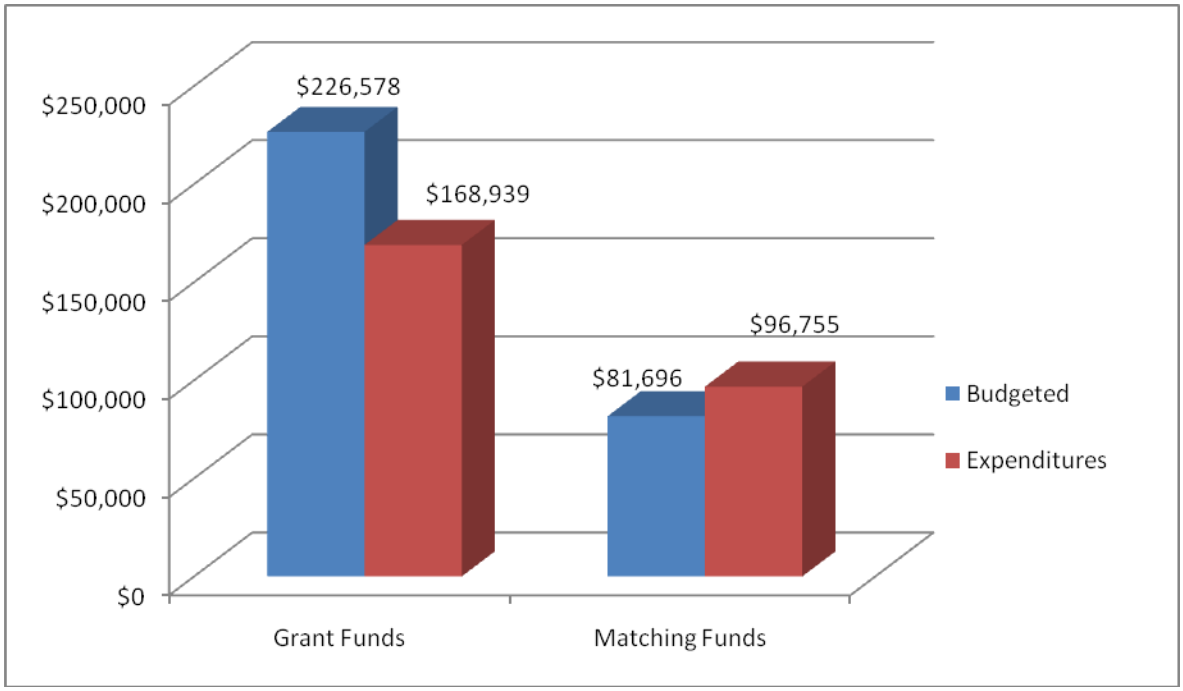
Comparison of Grant Funds and Matching Funds – Cycle 1

As shown in Figure 6.2, average awarded amounts were $226,578, whereas average actual expenditures were $168,936. Actual expenditures were 75% of the total award. Average budgeted matching funds were $81,696 for Cycle 1 grantees. However, the actual expenditures of matching funds were 18% higher than the budgeted amounts, or the original average amount planned by CDR Cycle 1 grantees.

In sum, CDR Cycle 1 grantees spent fewer TEA funds than they were awarded. On the other hand, grantees spent more of their matching funds than planned. This indicates that CDR Cycle 1 grantees leveraged matching funds during the grant program period. While Cycle 1 grant funds will no longer be available to them, funds from collaborative partners may lead to more sustainable programs over the long run.

[39]Grantees can expend funds in ways that were not originally planned in their grant applications, as long as the total of these unplanned expenditures does not surpass 25% of the original budget. If grantees want to expend more than 25% of their budget on such expenditures, they have the option to amend their budgets.

Figure 6.2: Comparison of Grant Funds and Matching Funds for CDR Cycle 1 Grantees



Source: CDR Cycle 1 Grant Applications; CDR Cycle 1 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

Cycle 2 Awards, Budgets, and Expenditures

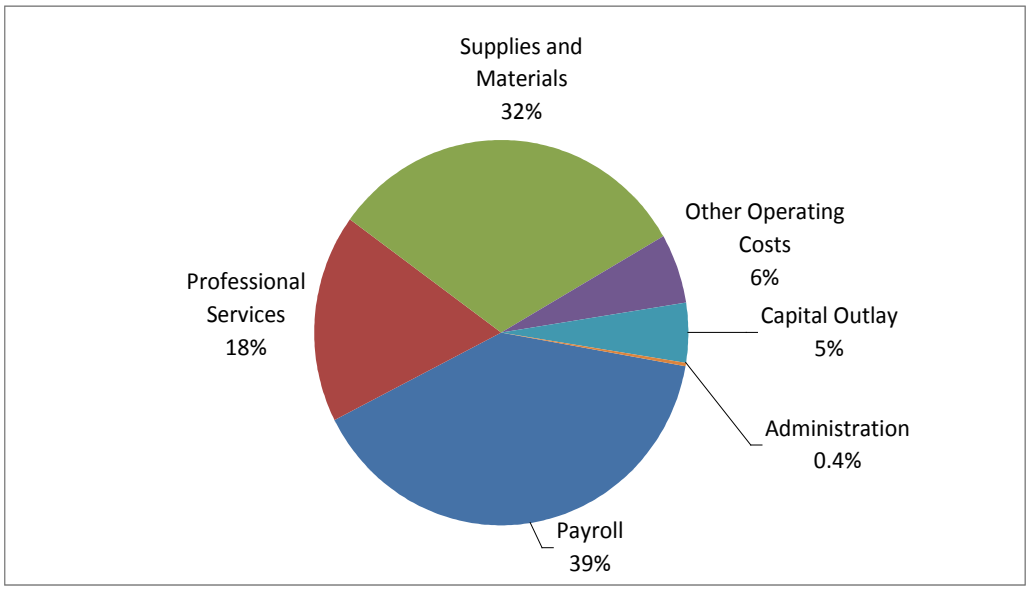
Only one year of expenditure data was available for Cycle 2 grantees at the time of this report. The results in this section therefore present a partial picture of the overall cost effectiveness of Cycle 2 grantees.

Total Costs – Cycle 2

Overall, Cycle 2 grantees spent the largest percentage of their budgets on payroll expenses, as did Cycle 1 grantees. In contrast with Cycle 1 grantees, they spent a more substantial amount on supplies and materials. In the first year of the Cycle 2 grant period, the 16 CDR Cycle 2 grantees spent an average of $81,936 from TEA to cover the overall costs of their programs. Of the five major funding categories constituting grantees' budgets (see Figure 6.3), the highest average amount spent was on payroll (an average of $32,444, or 40% of the total expenditures), followed by supplies and materials (an average of $25,849, or 31% of the total expenditures), and professional services (an average of $14,475, or 18% of the total expenditures). Other operating costs, capital outlay costs, and administrative costs combined comprised an average of 11% of the total expenditures.[40]

[40] Grantees can expend funds in ways that were not originally planned in their grant applications, as long as the total of these unplanned expenditures does not surpass 25% of the original budget. If grantees want to expend more than 25% of their budget on such expenditures, they have the option to amend their budgets.

Figure 6.3: Total Average Expenditure of Cycle 2 Grantees (n=16)



Source: CDR Cycle 2 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

Regarding the use of student incentives, none of the CDR Cycle 2 grantees budgeted funds for food service (which falls under supplies and materials). Two of the CDR Cycle 2 grantees budgeted funds for student incentives, which fall under other operating costs. One of these grantees allocated $24,000 in grant funds and $44,000 in matching funds for student incentives, and during the first year of the grant period, spent $35,650 in matching funds. The second grantee allocated funds for student incentives (although the amount was not broken out from other operating costs in their application), and spent $2,770 in grant funds and $240 in matching funds in the first year of the grant period.

Comparison of Budgets and Expenditures – Cycle 2

Overall, at the time of this report, CDR Cycle 2 grantees spent less than half of what they allocated, with two exceptions. Grantees spent over 60% on supplies and materials and capital outlays of their original budget on these categories. Cycle 2 grantees were awarded, on average, a total of $241,631 to cover all program costs. Their actual program expenditures in the first grant year were about 34% of their grant awards, at an average of $81,936 (see Table 6.3). In terms of payroll costs, grantees allocated an average of $131,697, but actually expended an average of $32,444 for such costs. This represents an average of 25% of budgeted amounts. CDR grantees budgeted, on average, $32,862 to cover professional services; they spent, on average, $14,475, about 44% of their budget on the same category. Whereas grantees budgeted an average of $42,969 for supplies and materials, they expended $25,849 for these costs, 60% of their budgeted amounts. Grantees budgeted an average of $28,255 for other operating costs, but actually spent $4,915, only 17% of their budgeted amounts for such costs. In terms of capital outlay, grantees budgeted, on average, $5,848, and actually expended $3,934 for such costs, representing 67% of the budgeted amount.

Table 6.3:

Comparison of Average Program Budgets to Average Program Expenditures for Cycle 2 CDR Grantees

Category	Total Average Amount (Grant) (N=16)		
	Budgeted	Expended	% Expended
Payroll Costs	$131,697	$32,444	25%
Professional and Contracted Services	$32,862	$14,475	44%
Supplies and Materials	$42,969	$25,849	60%
Other Operating Costs	$28,255	$4,915	17%
Capital Outlay	$5,848	$3,934	67%
Administration	-	$319	-
Total Costs:	$241,631	$81,936	34%

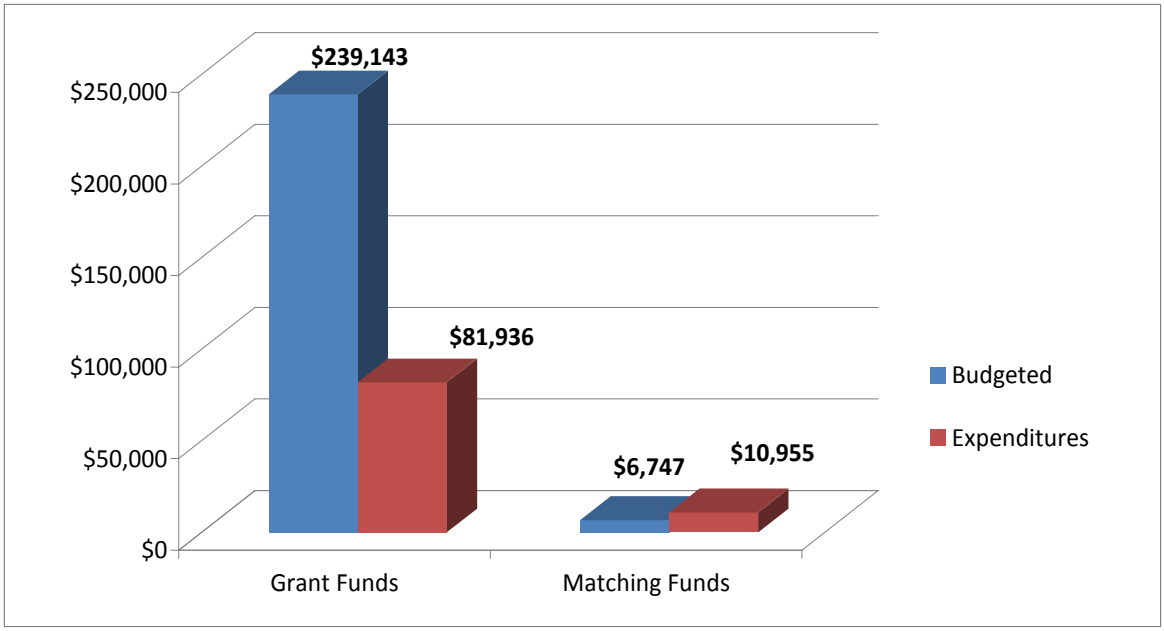
Source: CDR Cycle 2 Grant Applications; CDR Cycle 2 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

Comparison of Grant Funds and Matching Funds – Cycle 2

As Figure 6.4 shows, at the time expenditures were reported, average Cycle 2 grantees had spent 34% of their grant funds ($239,143). In terms of matching funds, Cycle 2 grantees budgeted $6,747, but actually spent $10,955, 62% more than the original budget, or the original average amount planned by CDR Cycle 2 grantees.

In sum, CDR Cycle 2 grantees reported spending less than half of their grant funds, but substantially more than the allocated matching funds. Again, similar to CDR Cycle 1 grantees, this indicates that CDR Cycle 2 grantees also were able to leverage matching funds during the first year of the grant program period. The difference here, though, is that Cycle 2 grant funds will still be available to Cycle 2 grantees for another year, so these data may look different the second year of the grant period.

Figure 6.4: Comparison of Grant Funds and Matching Funds for CDR Cycle 2 Grantees



Source: CDR Cycle 2 Grant Applications; CDR Cycle 2 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

Cycle 1 Grantees' Cost Per Student

Table 6.4 details the programmatic cost per student for grantees. The six Cycle 1 CDR grantees served 1,924 students during the program implementation period, about 42% more than they had planned to serve (1,355); this number ranged from 158 to 926 students per program. This translated into an approximate average cost of $527 per student over the 22-month grant award period, which was lower than the amount they planned to spend per student ($834).

Table 6.4:

Planned Expenditures and Matched Funds for Cycle 1 Grantees (Full 2-Year Grant Period)

Grantee Name	Number of Students Served (Year 1 & 2)	Total Expenditures (match funds excluded) (Year 1 & 2)	Average Cost per Student (Year 1 & 2)
Brownsville ISD	926	$246,167	$266
Edgewood ISD	160	$79,788	$499
Houston ISD	158	$116,358	$736
Los Fresnos ISD	174	$248,543	$1,428
Port Arthur ISD	285	$147,641	$518
School of Excellence in Education	221	$175,137	$792
Average Total	321	$168,939	$527

Source: CDR Cycle 1 Grantee Uploads; CDR Cycle 1 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms

Cycle 2 Grantees' Cost Per Student

Table 6.5 illustrates the programmatic cost per student for CDR Cycle 2 grantees for the first year of the grant period. The 16 CDR Cycle 2 grantees served a total of 3,509 students during the program implementation period, averaging 219 students served per grantee. Based on the money they had expended during this reporting period, this translated to an approximate cost of $399 per student, which was substantially lower than Cycle 1. But, it is important to keep in mind that the cost data of Cycle 2 were preliminary data (as are the students served data). Cycle 2 grantees will report final expenditures by June 30, 2011, at which time a more comprehensive picture of average actual expenditures per student can be illustrated.

Table 6.5:

Expenditures and Matched Funds for Cycle 2 Grantees (Year 1 Only)

Grantee Name	Number of Students Served (Year 1)	Total Expenditures (match funds excluded) (Year 1)	Average Cost per Student (Year 1)
Austin ISD	69	$70,873	$1,027
Carrizo Springs CISD	315	$113,509	$360
Corsicana ISD	104	$34,542	$332
Dallas ISD	167	$39,143	$234
Dallas Can! Charter Academy	124	$107,439	$866
Del Valle ISD	198	$128,705	$650
Everman ISD	316	$118,546	$375
George Gervin Charter Academy	69	$75,868	$1,084
Harlandale ISD	198	$76,323	$385
McAllen ISD	389	-	-
Palestine ISD	500	$153,085	$306
Pasadena ISD	314	$91,801	$292
Plainview ISD	172	$59,400	$345
San Antonio ISD	50	$59,156	$1,183
Snyder ISD	407	$76,523	$188
Spring Branch ISD	116	$106,070	$914
Average Total	**219**	**$81,936**	**$399**

Source: CDR Cycle 2 Grantee Uploads (Year 1); CDR Cycle 2 Grantee Expenditure Reporting Forms (Year 1)

CDR Cost-Effectiveness

CDR costs per student were compared to similar well-known dropout prevention programs. CDR's average cost of $527 per student annually for Cycle 1 and $399 per student annually for Cycle 2 compares favorably to other dropout prevention programs, many of which are implemented in Texas school districts:[41]

- Check and Connect: $1,685 per student annually
- ALAS (Achievement for Latinos through Academic Success): $1,314 per student annually
- Project GRAD: $550 per student annually
- Talent Search: $417 per student annually
- Career Academies: $688 per student annually
- Communities In Schools of Texas (Level 2 Services): $762 per student annually[42]

CDR Cycle 1 grantees, which are nearing completion of their grants, had a lower annual per-student cost than all other programs except for Talent Search – and per-student costs were close to those for Project GRAD. Given that CDR costs less than most similar programs, and because CDR was found to have positive effects on student outcomes for CDR grantees, it appears that CDR provides a cost-effective approach to address dropout prevention. A more thorough comparison of the intensity of services, differences in program components, and the magnitude of outcomes is needed in order to determine for certain whether CDR is truly cost-effective relative to other programs.

Sustainability Planning

In general, CDR grantees appear to be effectively locating sources of matching funds to a greater extent than grantees anticipated. In the long-term, these sources will likely be critical in order for grantees to sustain programs beyond the grant period. In addition to the matching funds from collaborative partners, five of the six CDR Cycle 1 grantees addressed sustainability in their grant applications, and a summary of these plans is presented in Table 6.6. Three of the five grantees planned to pursue sustainability strategies focused on local efforts while two grantees (Los Fresnos and Edgewood) planned to pursue a combination of local and state support.

[41] Cost data for other dropout prevention programs were drawn from the What Works Clearinghouse, which can be accessed online here.

[42] CIS Level 2 services are case-managed, sustained services, which are distinguished from Level 1 whole-school services. The CDR service model is more congruent with Level 2 CIS services than Level 1 services, and therefore, the cost of Level 2 CIS services provides a more fair basis of comparison.

Table 6.6

Sustainability Planning Initiatives Undertaken by CDR Cycle 1 Grantees

Grantee Name	Planning Efforts
School of Excellence in Education	Marketing plan will be implemented to raise community awareness.
Los Fresnos CISD	Financial sustainability will occur through new re-enrolled counts for state ADA reimbursements, career and technology education (CTE) funding streams, and district commitment to efforts.
Houston ISD	The Department of Student Engagement will seek budgetary commitments from campuses, regional offices and other district sources; Funds from Title I, Title III, Title IV, Title V, High School Allotment and re-grouped ADA funds from increased attendance.
Edgewood ISD	Major initiatives and partnerships will be maintained despite grant funding. Local and state funding will be used to sustain program. The evaluation data will inform scope changes and design of the program.
Brownsville ISD	A dropout committee comprised of community organizations was established.
Port Arthur ISD	Will work directly with the school district to sustain the program. Because Port Arthur aims to address in-school suspension policy, which is a fundamental element of the district's processes, at least part of the program will be sustainable if the policy is successfully implemented.

Source: CDR Cycle 1 grant applications

As with the Cycle 1 grantees, each Cycle 2 grantee indicated they planned to sustain their programs after the grant period, and they, too, were able to leverage matching funds from the collaborative partners. The proposed strategies are presented in Table 6.7 for Cycle 2 grantees. Most of the Cycle 2 grantees included in their sustainability plans efforts to examine the effectiveness of their program by collecting and analyzing various data. The results, in many cases, were reviewed by some form of governing body to monitor progress and make improvements. Other CDR Cycle 2 grantees also focused on establishing strong relationships with the community and its partners to ensure sustainability.

Table 6.7:

Sustainability Planning Initiatives Undertaken by CDR Cycle 2 Grantees

Grantee Name	Planning Efforts
Austin ISD	Building of collaborative processes; building of relationships with local employers; identification of new funding sources.
Carrizo Springs CISD	Soliciting feedback, monitoring progress, identifying program deficiencies, and correcting the program deficiencies.
Corsicana ISD	Meeting quarterly with campus leadership team to discuss evaluation report; monitoring of five core questions.
Dallas ISD	Administering pre/post self assessments, monitoring attendance records, requiring online participant journals after each session, sharing of evaluation data with principals and stakeholders, reporting to Curriculum and Instruction.
Dallas Can! Charter Academy	Comparing participant data to non-participant data at other schools; baseline tools, attendance, and survey data will be reviewed monthly; info disseminated to superintendent and TEA.
Del Valle ISD	Meeting weekly between grant manager and key program participants; regular, informal email feedback.
Everman ISD	Submitting feedback and progress reports to planning team and monitoring outcomes. This will be done by the program manager, budget manager, campus administrators, and educators together.
George Gervin Charter Academy	Reviewing progress on reporting systems for e-learning modules; student participation logs; student-specific checklists; benchmark testing every six weeks; dissemination to administrators.
Harlandale ISD	Compiling data every three weeks, reporting every six weeks on student outcomes; leading education staff members and CTE coordinator meet with counselors, report on students each six weeks; meet with community representatives.
McAllen ISD	Ongoing monitoring; information collected by grant manager and reported monthly; campus leadership team meets quarterly; grant manager continues to assess data as evaluation progresses.
Palestine ISD	Using data on 14 target outcomes and number of students promoted to Grades 10 and 11 on time; school metrics to measure effectiveness of implementation; sharing data with CDR partners.
Pasadena ISD	Soliciting information regularly for the quantitative, qualitative, and formative evaluations; addressing identified program deficiencies at least monthly.
Plainview ISD	Overseeing analyses and major events by grant committee; communicating outside of school by project manager.
San Antonio ISD	Recording attendance and services after each contact with a student; providing sign-in sheets for all people involved; providing ongoing feedback from project manager to staff; disseminating findings to TEA and community quarterly.
Snyder ISD	Evaluation committee will meet each six weeks to discuss effectiveness and improvement; staff will receive a benchmark graph; the team will decide on suitable indicators at every level; staff receives ongoing TA and training.
Spring Branch ISD	Interventions will be evaluated on a student-level basis every nine weeks; the district research staff and instructional leadership team will evaluate data and survey teachers, parents, and students; crisis intervention teams for students with grades below 70%.

Source: CDR Cycle 2 grant applications

Summary

Budgets and expenditures reported for both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees indicated that, while grantees were able to spend CDR grant funds on a variety of activities, the majority of funds were spent on organizational expenses, such as payroll costs for program staff and contracted services to work with community organizations. While TEA allowed grantees to use grant funds to provide student incentives, only one CDR Cycle 1 and two CDR Cycle 2 grantees utilized grant funds in this way. Specifically, the one CDR Cycle 1 grantee budgeted funds for food service, but did not spend any funds for food service. The two CDR Cycle 2 grantees budgeted funds for student incentives and spent part of these funds during the first year of the grant period.

For Cycle 1 grantees, the budgets and total expenditures in broad categories across the entire grant period were available. Cycle 1 grantees were awarded an average of $226,578 in grant funds, whereas average actual expenditures were $168,936, or 75% of the grant awards, indicating that Cycle 1 grantees spent fewer TEA funds than they were awarded. On the other hand, these grantees spent more matching funds than originally planned, which indicates that CDR Cycle 1 grantees leveraged matching funds during the grant program period, which may lead to more sustainable programs over the long run.

The six Cycle 1 grantees served a total of 1,924 students during the two years of the grant award period (through April 30, 2010) and spent an average cost per student of $527. Because Cycle 1 grantees originally projected to serve 1,355 students, the program proved to be more cost-effective than the original expectation of $834 per student. Since CDR costs less for Cycle 1 grantees when compared to similar well-known programs, and because CDR was found to have positive effects on student outcomes for CDR Cycle 1 grantees, CDR was cost-effective for Cycle 1 grantees.

Because of certain limitations (i.e., only one year of expenditure data was available, grantees are not required to draw down funds as they are expended), the "cost per student" value was only reported for the first year of the Cycle 2 grant project period. Thus far, Cycle 2 CDR grantees have served 3,508 students at an average cost of $399 per student. Continued tracking of the number of students served, outcomes achieved, and funds spent on the CDR program by Cycle 2 grantees will lead to a better understanding of the cost-effectiveness of CDR Cycle 2 grants.

7. Discussion and Next Steps for CDR

Summary of Evaluation Findings

Six Cycle 1 and 16 Cycle 2 CDR grantees received $6.6 million to implement programs in 41 schools in the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years. The six Cycle 1 grantees served 1,924 students at an average cost of $527 per student per year. The 16 Cycle 2 grantees served 3,508 students at an average cost of $399 in the 2009–10 school year.

Four primary service areas were required as part of the grant:

> ***"CDR has helped me a lot in learning job skills, learning how to apply, how to be a good worker, and how to keep my head up no matter what comes my way."***
>
> -CDR Student

- *Workforce Skill Development* – Career development was a strong focus of Cycle 2 grantees. Almost a third (32%) of students received career development services for an average of 4.8 hours per week. Career development services included paid employment, internship opportunities, and advanced career and vocational training for participating students.

- *Academic Support* – Academic support was the service offered most often to CDR students. These services included tutoring programs, credit recovery, academic acceleration, active learning strategies, career and technical education, and software to enhance student learning. The majority of Cycle 1 CDR students (68% in 2008–09 and 85% in 2009–10) and Cycle 2 CDR students (65% in 2009–10) received academic support such as tutoring or credit recovery. Cycle 2 had both a lower proportion of students receiving academic services, and a lower average number of hours per week (3.1 in 2009–10) than Cycle 1. Cycle 1 grantees, therefore, can be fairly considered to have had a stronger academic focus than Cycle 2 grantees.

- *Attendance Improvement* –Attendance services included truancy and attendance intervention and incentive programs, school attachment, and positive behavior support. In the 2009–10 school year, 262 Cycle 1 CDR students (17%) received an average of 0.8 hours per week of attendance services. By contrast, 876 Cycle 2 students (25%) received attendance services for an average of 10 hours per week.

- *Student and Family Support Services* –These services included addressing the social, emotional, and personal needs of students and their families. Cycle 1 grantees significantly increased family support services from the 2008–09 school year (7 students served) to the 2009–10 school year (396 students served). Cycle 2 grantees provided family support services to 279 students (8%).

Academic services were the primary focus of both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees, although Cycle 1 grantees provided a greater intensity of academic services to a larger proportion of students. Behavior support was the secondary focus of Cycle 1 grantees, while career development and attendance services were the secondary focus of Cycle 2 grantees. Moreover, Cycle 1 grantees appear to provide a smaller number of service hours to a greater proportion of students than Cycle 2, which appears to be more intensive for a smaller number of students.

Effects of CDR Activities Across Grantees

A summary of findings from the CDR evaluation follow. For each outcome area, a summary of both qualitative and quantitative evidence is presented.

> ***"The instructors that work here are always motivating you to do great and they have big expectation from you and that's great because coming from a low SES family I've been told that I'm just going to work a minimum paying job and so on and when I got accepted here I just felt like 'hey these people want me to better myself and want the best for me and for me to succeed and not just personally but in my educational field."***
>
> -CDR Student

Academic Achievement

Changes in proficiency rates on TAKS-Math, TAKS-Reading, and TAKS-Science exams were measured between the year prior to CDR entry (i.e., baseline) and the end of the first year in the program. CDR students' proficiency in TAKS-Math improved strongly between the year before and the year after they entered the program. The percentage of CDR students who met standards in TAKS-Math increased 9 percentage points, from 46% at baseline to 55% at the end of the first year. The percentage of CDR students who met standards in TAKS-Reading increased from 79% at baseline to 82% in the year following entry into the program. This increase of 3 percentage points was slightly higher than the expected change based on state averages (+2 percentage points). The percentage of CDR students who met standards in TAKS-Science increased from 43% at baseline to 78% in the year following entry into the program. This 35 percentage point increase compared favorably to the state average (+23 percentage points). Moreover, CDR students who were at risk had a 41 percentage point increase in TAKS-Science proficiency, which outpaced the state average for at-risk students (+39 percentage points).

Results from the quasi-experimental study indicate that Cycle 1 schools reported stronger gains than comparison schools in both TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading proficiency rates after one year of implementation, and these differences became even more pronounced after two years of implementation. CDR schools gained eight percentage points in TAKS-Reading over a two-year implementation period while comparison schools gained 3 percentage points. Moreover, CDR schools' TAKS-Math proficiency rates improved by 15 percentage points over the same period, compared to an improvement of 12 percentage points for comparison schools. Cycle 2 CDR schools underperformed their comparison schools in TAKS-Math proficiency improvements (+6 percentage points for CDR schools, +11 percentage points for comparison schools) and in TAKS-Reading proficiency improvements (+2 percentage points for CDR schools, +3 percentage points for comparison schools). At both the student-level and at the school-level, TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math performance appears to be stronger in the second year. This indicates the need for sustained engagement of CDR students – and the need for perspective in expectations for results.

Across the six case study grantees that were visited during the 2009–10 school year, five grantees noted positive improvements in participating students' academic achievement. One grantee reported mixed results regarding academic achievement. Factors that impacted academic achievement included mentoring, TAKS tutorials, financial incentives, college visits, personal attention from CDR staff, and personal graduation plans.

Attendance Improvement

In all but one case study district, interviewees indicated that attendance rates among participating students improved over the course of the CDR program; however, some grantees reported that a challenge to improved attendance was due to the fact that many participating CDR students were also caretakers for their families which could require time away from school. Overall, strategies to improve attendance across grantees ranged from attendance contracts, financial incentives, and prizes. In addition, one grantee that placed

probation officers at each high school campus reported that there were zero absences for students on probation during the second year of CDR implementation. The probation officers monitored the students' attendance rates because attendance is attached to the students' probation requirements.

Improved Behavior

Case study interviewees across all six case study grantees reported that behavior among participating students improved over the CDR program period. Many of the interviewees believed that the improvement in student behavior was attributable to positive relationships with adults, such as mentors, counselors, and CDR staff. In addition, one grantee reported that over the course of the two-year CDR program, there were zero suspensions; the lack of suspensions was attributed to the college atmosphere created at the alternative school campus where faculty focused on positive moments. Another grantee credited their off-campus setting as a facilitator for improved behavior because students were given the opportunity to complete coursework at their own pace outside of the high school campus atmosphere.

Dropout Rates

> ***"If it was not for them pushing me, I would have dropped out of school already."***
>
> -CDR Student

Cycle 1 CDR schools reported stronger reductions relative to their comparison group in both annual dropout rates and longitudinal dropout rates between baseline (2007–08) and the first year of CDR implementation (2008–09). Annual dropout rates declined 0.9% in CDR schools and increased by 0.3% in comparison schools. Longitudinal dropout rates declined by 3% in CDR schools and by 1% in comparison schools. Because the quasi-experimental results were based on a limited number of schools (n=11), these results are not statistically significant and should be interpreted with caution.

In the 2008–09 school year, 62 of the 955 Cycle 1 students served dropped out of school. This represents an 8% annual dropout rate, which is much higher than the 3% annual dropout rate observed statewide during the same period. Given that CDR schools are located in the highest need districts in the state – and ostensibly serve the highest need students within the district – this dropout rate does not compare as unfavorably to statewide results as it may first appear.

Evidence for decreased dropout rates across the six grantees during the case study site visits was anecdotal in all cases except one. One grantee in their second year of CDR implementation halved the number of dropouts after one year of implementation and was on the way towards halving the year one dropout rate after the second year of implementation. The other grantees reported that most of the participating CDR students stayed in school, but did not have supporting data at the time of the site visit.

Course Completion Rates

Patterns in course completion rates between baseline (2007–08) and the first year of CDR implementation (2008–09) indicated that Cycle 1 CDR students are completing math and reading courses at a higher rate in their first year of the program; therefore, CDR students are progressing in school at a faster rate, which may help them to be college and career ready. The strong academic focus of many CDR programs may explain these patterns; however, the reader should exercise caution in interpreting these results since these findings are not based on a comparison group. In other words, it cannot be determined what would have happened in the absence of CDR. The evidence regarding improved course completion rates, as with dropout rates, was anecdotal across the case study grantees; however, interviewees indicated that based on participating students' achievement and credit recovery work, it was likely that course completion rates would show improvement.

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

Support to families of students participating in the CDR program improved as a result of the CDR program; however, improvements between students' relationships with their families was difficult for case study interviewees to gauge. In terms of support to families, grantees implemented different strategies such as hosting parent-teacher meetings in convenient settings for parents, conducting home visits, hosting monthly parent meetings or annual conferences, providing opportunities for parents to engage with guest speakers, hosting special ceremonies for students and parents, and providing one-on-one attention with students' families.

> ***"[CDR staff member] always helps my family with food, pay bills, and my mom does not worry so much."***
>
> -CDR Student

College Readiness

To determine college readiness of CDR students, the evaluation team analyzed student-level TAKS data from (1) Cycle 1 CDR students who took the TAKS Exit-Level Exam in the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years, and (2) Cycle 2 CDR students who took the TAKS Exit Level exam during the 2009–10 school year. Scale scores of 2200 and above are considered college-ready for a given subject. Rates of college readiness among CDR students were higher among Cycle 2 students than Cycle 1 students, and higher in reading than in math. Slightly under half (45%) of Cycle 2 students met or exceeded the HERC college-ready standards in math, while over two-thirds of Cycle 2 students were college-ready in reading. Moreover, 42% of Cycle 2 students were college ready in both subjects. By contrast, roughly one-third (31%) of Cycle 1 students were college-ready in math and slightly under half (49%) were college-ready in reading. About a quarter of Cycle 1 students (26%) were college-ready in both subjects.

> ***"From the day I joined CDR, I have learned to become very independent, socialize better with people and most importantly, I am very motivated to go to college."***
>
> -CDR Student

Most of the interviewees commented on students' increased college awareness rather than college readiness. Students' awareness of college across all six grantees increased as a result of college campus field trips and tours, visiting with college representatives, and learning about, and applying for, student federal financial aid. In addition, many of the CDR programs offered students dual credit courses which prepared students for the rigor of college courses. As a result of these efforts, many students were reported as being excited about the prospect of attending college.

Technological Knowledge

Improvement in participating students' technological knowledge was largely attributed by case study interviewees to students' interaction with computer programs as part of the CDR program, although most grantees' CDR programs did not explicitly focus on improving students' technological knowledge. Interviewees noted that the CDR programs and school classrooms utilized technology and computers on a daily basis, thereby increasing students' familiarity with and knowledge of technology. Many of the grantees used credit recovery programs that offered students a self-paced option for earning credits.

Ethical Workplace Behavior

Collaborative student surveys provided a snapshot of CDR students' behaviors and attitudes on a range of outcomes, including their workplace behaviors. More than half of the CDR students who were employed and who responded to the student survey reported engaging in positive workplace behaviors in the past month (e.g., staying late to work on a task that really needed to be done). Conversely, more than two-thirds of the

students reported that they did not engage in negative workplace behaviors in the past month (e.g., intentionally arriving late for work).

Interviewees agreed that ethical workplace behavior improved as a result of the CDR program. Ethical workplace behaviors were modeled to participating students through mentor relationships, job shadowing, and career workshops. Anecdotal evidence was cited by interviewees to support the improved behavior such as students learning about how to dress and communicate appropriately at work. In addition, there were very few instances where an employer needed to contact the school regarding a student's behavior. In cases where an employer did contact the school regarding a student's behavior, it gave the CDR staff a chance to work with the student and teach them how to appropriately conduct themselves in a work environment.

Effective Leadership Skills

Case study interviewees reported positive results in regards to students' development of effective leadership skills; however, the results were anecdotal and often only applied to select students participating in the CDR program. Most grantees indicated that some participating students were developing leadership skills through joining extracurricular clubs, taking an active role in their academic achievement, modeling success to other participating students, tutoring elementary students, and becoming involved in the local community.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

> ***"I started to communicate more with teachers and ask for help when needed."***
>
> -CDR Student

Almost half of CDR students indicated in the student survey that the program has helped them at least "quite a bit" in developing their writing skills – and more than half of respondents indicated that CDR has helped them at least "quite a bit" in speaking effectively. All of the case study grantees reported that students' oral communication skills improved over the course of the CDR program. Only two grantees reported that written communication skills improved. It was clear to interviewees through interaction with participating students that the students' utilized better oral communication skills through increased interaction with mentors, teachers, counselors, and CDR staff. Improvement in written communication skills was harder to judge for interviewees because many of the CDR program components were computer-based and did not require students to write essays or papers. One grantee noted that students provided strong responses to open-ended question on job applications and during career exploration workshops.

Performance on Critical Success Factors

In addition to specified program goals, TEA asked the evaluation team to monitor critical success factors for CDR, which are measurable characteristics believed to be critical in obtaining program goals/outcomes. These indicators enabled TEA to determine whether grantees were on track to successfully achieve the goals specified for CDR. These indicators included the following:

- *All participating students have Personal Graduation Plans (PGPs) that reflect the rigor of the recommended plan*: PGPs are required for all at-risk students in Texas. While the case study teams noted the widespread use of PGPs, it was outside the scope of this evaluation to monitor individual plans.

- *Students are participating in credit recovery programs and are recovering credit sufficient for graduation*: Altogether, seven Grade 10 and 53 Grade 11 students participated in CDR and graduated in 2009. These students took advantage of credit recovery programs that made graduation possible.

- *Students are receiving academic support services*: The majority of Cycle 1 CDR students (68% in 2008–09 and 85% in 2009–10) and Cycle 2 CDR students (65% in 2009–10) received academic support such as

tutoring or credit recovery. The CDR program is tailored to students' needs; therefore, not all students may receive academic support services. Nonetheless, academic support services were the primary focus of both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees.

- *Students are receiving attendance support services*: Attendance support services were a strong focus of Cycle 2 grantees. In the 2009–10 school year, 262 Cycle 1 CDR students (17%) received an average of 0.8 hours per week of attendance services. By contrast, 876 Cycle 2 students (25%) received attendance services for an average of 10 hours per week.

- *Students are receiving student and family support services*. Behavior support services were a strong focus of Cycle 1 grantees. In the 2008–09 school year, 24% of Cycle 1 students received behavior support services for an average of 3 hours per week. In the 2009–10 school year, 22% of Cycle 1 and 10% of Cycle 2 CDR students received behavior support services an average of 1 hour per week. CDR also provided connections to resources to 9% of Cycle 1 students in the 2008–09 school year and 2% of Cycle 1 students in the 2009–10 school year. Less than five Cycle 2 students received connections to resources. Family support was also a large focus of CDR grantees. In the 2009–10 school year, 26% of Cycle 1 students and 8% of Cycle 2 students received family support services.

- *The school attendance, grades and behavior of participating students are improving*. Attendance improvement and improved behavior were identified by case study interviewees as the areas with the strongest student outcomes. Although the evaluation team did not investigate course grades, the team did find that course completion rates improved over time, which is critical to keeping students on track to graduate.

- *Students are participating in workforce training, job shadowing, employment internships and other job skill activities*. Career development was a strong focus of Cycle 2 grantees. Almost a third (32%) of students received career development services for an average of 4.8 hours per week. Career development services included paid employment, internship opportunities, and advanced career and vocational training for participating students.

Limitations

It is important to note that not all outcome data were available for Cycle 2 CDR students. Because of lag times in the release of data, primary outcomes such as dropout rates, attendance rates, behavioral measures, and course completion rates were not available for the second year of program implementation (i.e., the first year of Cycle 2 implementation). Qualitative evidence, however, was encouraging. Moreover, the majority of results presented thus far do not utilize a comparison group design, so statements could not be made about what would have happened in the absence of the program. Although the evaluation team employed a comparison group design at the school level, the analysis had a limited sample size (n=11 Cycle 1 schools and n=26 Cycle 2 schools), which limited the evaluation team's ability to detect statistically significant findings. However, through the triangulation of data from a number of sources, significant support exists for the evaluation team's hypothesis that CDR appears to have made a positive difference for at-risk students.

Despite these limitations, the evidence analyzed thus far has been consistently positive for CDR. It is evident that CDR students, staff, and partners are almost universally supportive of the work that is being done through this grant program, and the results indicate that this work is paying off.

Conclusion

The CDR program was found to have statistically significant, positive effects on students' TAKS-Math, TAKS-Reading, and TAKS-Science proficiency rates. Moreover, qualitative findings from CDR staff and partners supported these positive effects. Improvements were noticed in students' ethical workplace behaviors, technological knowledge, leadership skills, and oral and written communications skills. It was clear from case study interviews that the CDR program was viewed as successful and that students benefitted from their participation in the program. Attendance improvement and improved behavior were identified by case study interviewees as the areas with the strongest student outcomes.

> ***"Being in this program helped me a lot to better prepare myself for life after high school. It also gave me a better perspective on college life, and all that responsibility and freedom that comes along with it."***
>
> -CDR Student

The consistency of praise for CDR from both students and staff was encouraging. Even though all CDR programs that were the subject of this study had different service models, student populations, and areas of focus, they were consistent with regard to the positive feedback that was received.

The results for CDR on both student-level and school-level outcomes were also striking in their consistency. Nearly every outcome studied demonstrated either positive movement among CDR students, or positive change relative to a comparison group. While the magnitude of some changes was modest, the range of positive outcomes appeared to indicate that CDR is having beneficial effects on the college and career readiness of the 5,432 CDR students who were served by the program.

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Appendix A: CDR Interview Protocols

Collaborative Dropout Reduction
Joint Telephone Interview Protocol: Collaborative Grant Project Coordinator AND Community Partner Representative

General Information about Your Collaborative Project
General questions about your project to get a sense of your vision of your Collaborative project and any modifications you have experienced since implementing the project.

1. Briefly, in a few sentences, how would each of you describe the overall purpose of your Collaborative project?

2. In what ways, if at all, has your Collaborative project changed from what you originally proposed in your grant application?
    a. Are you planning to make any changes in the future?

Organization and Individual Participation in Your Collaborative Project
Questions related to who is participating.

3. FOR DISTRICT PERSONNEL: Do you serve as the grant manager or project director for your Collaborative project?
    a. If so, what are your roles and responsibilities for your Collaborative project?

4. FOR PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE: What contributions and services do you provide for your Collaborative project?

5. Are there other individuals who are key personnel for your Collaborative project?
    a. If so, what are their roles and responsibilities in your Collaborative project?

6. Which organizations that are participating in your Collaborative project do you have formal Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or other formal agreements with, and what are the contributions (cash and/or in-kind) and services provided by each organization?

	Organization Name	Brief Description of Contributions and Services
Local Businesses		
Other Local Governments/ Law Enforcement Agencies		
Nonprofit Organizations		
Faith-based Organizations		
Institutions of Higher Education		

7. Are there any other people who are involved in your Collaborative project who we should interview?

8. Are there any other organizations with which you are trying to partner? If so, please list and briefly describe the contributions and services you have in mind for them?

Components of Your Collaborative Project

Questions related to actual components of your Collaborative project in terms of the types of strategies that you are using.

9. What strategies are you implementing as part of your Collaborative Project?
    a. Workforce Skill Development – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Paid employment
        - ☐ Internship opportunities
        - ☐ Advanced career and vocational training
        - ☐ Cooperative education programs
        - ☐ Job shadowing
        - ☐ Mentoring
        - ☐ Career guidance
        - ☐ Other workforce skill development strategies (please specify)

          _____
    b. Academic Support – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Tutoring programs
        - ☐ Credit recovery and reentry
        - ☐ Academic acceleration
        - ☐ Active learning strategies
        - ☐ Career and technical education
        - ☐ Individualized education/graduation plans
        - ☐ Use of educational technology/software
        - ☐ Peer-to-peer tutoring
        - ☐ Teacher professional development
        - ☐ Other academic support strategies (please specify)

          _____
    c. Attendance Improvement – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Truancy and attendance intervention
        - ☐ Incentive programs
        - ☐ Activities designed to foster student/school engagement
        - ☐ Positive behavior support
        - ☐ Other strategies designed to increase school attendance and reduce truancy and tardiness (please specify) _____

          _____
    d. Student & Family Support Service – Yes _ No _ (If Yes, does it include)
        - ☐ Social student needs
        - ☐ Emotional student needs
        - ☐ Personal student needs
            - o Health issues
            - o Emotional health needs
            - o Mental health needs
            - o Family concerns
            - o Substance abuse
            - o Involvement with the juvenile justice system
            - o Pregnancy prevention/services
            - o Other issues that may prevent or hinder student academic performance and success
        - ☐ Other strategies (please specify) _____

10. When do you start – or when did you start – serving students?

11. How do you identify students for inclusion into your program? In other words, which students were targeted to participate?
    a. Once students are identified, what steps do you take to recruit and enroll them in your program?

12. In what ways, if any, are you monitoring student outcomes before and after program implementation?

13. From each of your perspectives, how do you feel about the way your Collaborative project has been implemented so far?
    a. How has the partnership between the district and the partner organization(s) been working out?

14. What barriers or challenges, if any, have you faced during the implementation of your Collaborative project?
    a. If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

15. What factors, if any, do you believe are helping you to facilitate the implementation of your Collaborative project?

16. What else would you like to add about the implementation of your Collaborative project?

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Grant Coordinator Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are the grant coordinator we interviewed in December 2008/January 2009.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain further information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district.

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Program Information
First, I would like to discuss with you the demographics/characteristics of your students and the schools served, as well as gather information about the implementation of your Collaborative program.

1. Why did your district decide to apply for the Collaborative grant? In other words, please state why you need the grant.

2. What are the characteristics of the schools served through the Collaborative program?
   Probe: How did you determine what schools to serve?

3. How is the program implemented at each school?
   Probe: Are there any variations in implementation at each school?

4. During the phone interview in December/January, you discussed facilitators and barriers to implementing the Collaborative program (*have previous answers ready*).
   a) Are there any new factors helping to facilitate the implementation of the Collaborative program?
   b) Are there any new barriers you have encountered? If so, how have you addressed these barriers?

5. How would you characterize the students who participate in your Collaborative program (e.g., grade level(s), socioeconomic status, risk factors)?
   Probe: Are you successful in enrolling students with targeted characteristics, or is your student population different than you expected/intended?
   Probe: Are students enrolled on a rolling admissions basis or have the same student been participating all throughout?

Section 2: Partnerships

Next, I would like to learn about your relationship with your community partners.

6. How did you identify community partners for the Collaborative grant?

7. During the phone interview in December/January, you listed the following partnering organizations [NOTE: INSERT PARTNER NAMES]:
   a) Have you added any additional partners?
   b) Have you ended your partnership with any organizations? If so, why?

8. Based on your survey rating (Q2), how would you characterize your relationship with your partner organization(s)?
   a) How do these partner organizations contribute to the Collaborative program?
   b) What are the main challenges, if any, you face in working with them? How have you addressed these challenges?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on participating students.

9. About how many (and what percentage of) students in each grade level participate/attend Collaborative program activities?
   Probe: Are there any barriers to participation (e.g., transportation)? If so, how have these barriers been addressed?

10. About how often have students been participating in Collaborative activities?
    a) Typically, how many days per week do students participate in program activities?
    b) Typically, how many hours per day do students participate?
    c) How long do students participate in the program (for a semester, the entire school year, etc.)?

11. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behavior? (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

12. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from this program?

    Probe: Are there any unintended student outcomes that have resulted from the Collaborative program?

13. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., workforce readiness skills) affected participating students in terms of the following career readiness skills:
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communication skills?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

14. In what ways, if any, have participating students been exposed to new employment opportunities?

15. How has the Collaborative program helped the families of students involved in the Collaborative program?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

16. How did your district plan to spend the combined grant funds and matching funds?
    a) Have you, or are you planning to, make any changes to how you spend your funding? If so, what are the changes?

17. Do you envision continuing the Collaborative program once funding ends?
    a) If yes:
        i. How will you continue to run the program (where will funding come from)?
        ii. What changes would you make to the program?
    b) If no:
        i. What are the reasons for not continuing the program?

Wrap Up

18. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about your Collaborative program?

Thank you for your time today.

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Community Partner Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a community partner for [ENTER DISTRICT NAME]'s Collaborative program.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district.

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Community Partner Name:
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Information
First, I would like to find out some information about you and your organization.

1. What is your position within your business/organization? How long have you held that position?

2. How long, if at all, has your business/organization been a partner with the school district? In what ways, if any, did you partner with the district prior to the Collaborative grant program?
   Probe: When did you start serving students as part of the Collaborative program?

Section 2: Role of Your Organization in the Collaborative Program
Next, I would like to gather more information about your role in the implementation of the Collaborative program in this district.

3. What is your personal role and level of involvement in the Collaborative program?

4. In regard to your business/organization's role in the Collaborative program, please describe:
    a) The services you provide the district for the Collaborative program.
    b) How many students you work with and how often you work with them.
    c) The roles/responsibilities your staff has with the Collaborative program (involved in planning/implementation, or solely service provision?).
    d) The types of activities your staff is implementing.
    e) What types of student outcomes are expected from your program and the program's focus? For instance, did your program target specific outcomes (e.g., gang awareness, alcohol and drug addiction, etc..)?
    f) The types and amount of communication you have with the Collaborative. *Probe*: Is the relationship truly collaborative?

5. Based on your survey rating (Q2), how would you characterize your organization's relationship with the district for the Collaborative program?
    a) How does the district contribute to the Collaborative program?
    b) What are the main challenges you face in working with them?

6. What barriers or challenges, if any, has your organization faced during the implementation of the Collaborative program?
    a) If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

7. What factors, if any, do you believe are helping you to facilitate the implementation of the Collaborative program?

8. How would you characterize the students who participate in your Collaborative program (e.g., grade level(s), socioeconomic status, risk factors)?
    Probe: Are you successful in enrolling students with targeted characteristics, or is your student population different than you expected/intended?
    Probe: Are students enrolled on a rolling admissions basis or have the same students been participating all throughout?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on the participating students.

9. In what ways, *if any*, have your business/organization's activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behavior? (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?
    g) Improved family support/relationships with family?
    h) Other student outcomes?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

10. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from your business/organization?

    Probe: In question 4, you mentioned that your program focused on the following outcomes (insert outcomes). Have you seen students improve in these areas?

11. In what ways, if any, have your business/organization's activities (i.e., workforce readiness skills) affected participating students in terms of the following career readiness skills:
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communication skills?
    e) Other work skills?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

12. In what ways, if any, have participating students been exposed to new employment opportunities?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

13. Has anyone from the district discussed continuing the Collaborative program with your organization once grant funding ends?
    a) If yes:
        ii. What changes, if any, would you make to the services you offer?
        iii. How will the program continue (funding source)?
    b) If no:
        iv. What are the reasons for not continuing the program?

Wrap Up

14. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about the Collaborative program?
Thank you for your time today.

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
District Administrator* Interview Protocol

*District administrators may include superintendents and/or designees (e.g., assistant superintendents, consultants)

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a district administrator involved in the Collaborative program.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district.

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Program Information

First, I would like to discuss with you the demographics/characteristics of your students and the schools served, as well as gather information about the implementation of your Collaborative program.

1. Briefly, in a few sentences, how would you describe the overall purpose of your Collaborative program?

2. What are the characteristics of the schools served through the Collaborative program?
   Probe: How did you determine what schools to serve?

3. How is the program implemented at each school?
   Probe: Are there any variations in implementation at each school?

4. What barriers or challenges, if any, have you faced during the implementation of your Collaborative program?
   a) If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

5. What factors, if any, do you believe are helping you to facilitate the implementation of the Collaborative program?

6. How would you characterize the students who participate in your Collaborative program (e.g., grade level(s), socioeconomic status, risk factors)?
   Probe: Are you successful in enrolling students with targeted characteristics, or is your student population different than you expected/intended?
   Probe: Are students enrolled on a rolling admissions basis or have the same student been participating all throughout?

Section 2: Partnerships

Next, I would like to learn about your relationship with your community partners.

7. How were community partners chosen for this Collaborative program?

8. The following organization(s) was/were listed as your Collaborative program partner(s) in your grant application: [NOTE: INSERT NAMES OF PARTNERS]. Has this changed?
   a) Have you added any additional partners?
   b) Have you ended your partnership with any organizations? If so, why?

9. Based on your survey rating (Q2), how would you characterize your relationship with your partner organization(s)?
   a) How do these partner organizations contribute to the Collaborative program?
   b) What are the main challenges you face in working with them? If so, how have you overcome these challenges?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on the participating students.

10. About how many (and/or what percentage of) students in each grade level participate/attend Collaborative program activities?
    Probe: Are there any barriers to participation (e.g., transportation)? If so, how have these barriers been addressed?

11. About how often have students been participating in Collaborative activities?
    a) Typically, how many days per week do students participate in program activities?
    b) Typically, how many hours per day do students participate?
    c) How long do students participate in the program (for a semester, the entire school year, etc.)?

12. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behaviors (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?
    g) Improved family support/relationships with family?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

13. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from this program?

    Probe: Are there any unintended student outcomes that have resulted from the Collaborative program?

14. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (e.g., workforce readiness skills) affected participating students in terms of the following career readiness skills:
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communication skills?

Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

15. In what ways, if any, have participating students been exposed to new employment opportunities?

16. How has the Collaborative program helped the families of students involved in the Collaborative program?

    Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

17. How did your district plan to spend the combined grant funds and matching funds?
    a) Have you, or are you planning to, make any changes to how you spend your funding? If so, what are the changes?

18. Do you envision continuing the Collaborative program once funding ends?
    a) If yes:
        v. How will you continue to run the program (where will funding come from)?
        vi. What changes would you make to the program?
    b) If no:
        vii. What are the reasons for not continuing the program?

Wrap Up

19. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about your Collaborative program?

Thank you for your time today.

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Principal/Vice Principal Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a principal/vice principal at a Collaborative school.

We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district, and at your school in particular.

This interview should take about 45 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Information
First, I would like to learn more about you, your school, and the implementation of the Collaborative program at your school.

1. How long have you been the principal/vice principal at (insert school name)?

2. How long has your school implemented the Collaborative?

3. How involved are you in the Collaborative?
   Probe: What activities do you participate in? Is your role to provide oversight or something more involved?

4. How do you identify the services/programs you offer to students at your school (all programs, not just the Collaborative)?
   a) How do you identify the needs of students at your school?
   b) In what ways does the Collaborative help meet the needs of students at your school?

5. What has your role been in bringing in/keeping the Collaborative at your school?

Section 2: Relationships
Next, I would like to learn about your relationship with your community partners.

6. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative program staff (from the district and community partners) and your students?
   Probe: Any particular strengths or limitations in the relationship?

7. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative staff (from the district and community partners) and the personnel at your school (i.e., vice principal, administrators, teachers)?
   Probe: Any particular strengths or limitations in the relationship? If so, what are they? How have you capitalized on these strengths and/or overcome these limitations?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on your school.

8. What value or benefit does the Collaborative bring to your school? In what ways, if any, does the Collaborative help you achieve your educational goals for the school/students?

9. Has the Collaborative brought any challenges to the school? If so, what are they?
   Probe: Are there any limitations of the program?
   a) How have you overcome these challenges/limitations?

10. What kind of feedback have you received about the Collaborative:
    a) From students?
    b) From parents?
    c) From teachers?
    d) From other principals?

Section 4: Sustainability

Lastly, I would like to learn about possible plans for sustainability of this program beyond the grant funding period.

11. What does it/will it take to ensure you are able to continue to offer the Collaborative at your school?
    Probe: Is funding all that's needed or do you want hard evidence that the program is working?

Wrap Up

12. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about your Collaborative program?

Dropout Reduction Collaborative Grant Pilot Program
Teacher Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is _____ from ICF International. We are working with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to evaluate the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. You were selected to participate in this interview because you are a teacher who works with Collaborative students.
We would like to take this opportunity to speak with you to obtain information about the Collaborative pilot program at this district. This interview should take approximately 30 minutes, and we ask that you review and sign the participant informed consent form, and then complete the accompanying short survey before we proceed.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

District Name:
Campus Name (if applicable):
Name:
Date: / / 2009 **Time:** : a.m./p.m.

Section 1: General Information
First, I would like to learn more about you, your school, and the implementation of the Collaborative program at your school.

1. How long have you been a teacher at (insert school name)?

2. What is your personal role and level of involvement in the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program?

Section 2: Relationships
Next, I would like to learn about relationships between staff, other personnel, and students.

3. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative staff and your students (strengths and limitations of relationships)?

4. How would you describe the relationship between Collaborative staff and the personnel at your school (i.e. principal, administrators, teachers, etc.)?
   Probe: Does the Collaborative engage school staff or does it simply broker services directly to outside partners?
   Probe: What are the strengths and limitations of these relationships? How have you capitalized on these strengths and/or overcome these limitations?
   Probe: Are there any ways in which these relationships can be improved?

Section 3: Program Effectiveness

Next, I would like to learn about any effects the Collaborative program has had on your school.

5. What changes – positive or negative – have you noticed in your students that participate in the Collaborative?

6. In what ways, if any, have the grant activities (i.e., academic support, college readiness) affected participating students in terms of the following:
    a) Academic achievement?
    b) Attendance improvement?
    c) Improved behavior? (e.g., fewer suspensions)
    d) Dropout rates?
    e) Course completion rates?
    f) College readiness?

   Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

7. Are there any other ways in which students have benefited from this program?

   Probe: Are there any unintended student outcomes that have resulted from the Collaborative program?

8. Have you seen improvements in your students' knowledge in the following areas? If so, how do you think the Collaborative is responsible for these changes?
    a) Technological knowledge?
    b) Ethical workplace behaviors?
    c) Effective leadership skills?
    d) Oral and written communications skills?

   Probe: What type of evidence/documentation (e.g., anecdotal, pre/post assessments, surveys) do you have for each of these?

9. Are there any challenges or limitations that the Collaborative has caused for you/your students? If so, what are they? How have you addressed these challenges and limitations?

10. What kind of feedback have you received about the Collaborative:
    a) From students?
    b) From parents?
    c) From other teachers?
    d) From the principal/vice principal?

11. What kind of feedback have you received about the Collaborative from other teachers or other school personnel? What were their reactions?

12. What one thing would you change about the Collaborative? What suggestions/ recommendations do you have for Collaborative?

13. What one thing would you NOT change about the Collaborative?

Wrap Up

14. And to wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add about the Collaborative program?

Appendix B: CDR Surveys

Collaborative Student Survey

1. Student Informed Assent

Because you are in a program at your school funded by the Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program (Collaborative), we would like to include you in the study of the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Collaborative program. This study will give TEA information on the effectiveness of the Collaborative program. TEA has joined with ICF International to conduct the study. If you are under 18 years old, your parent or guardian said it is okay for you to complete this survey, and now we are asking if you want to do it. You may or may not have completed a similar survey earlier if you have participated for more than one year.

All students from school districts in Texas who were in a Collaborative program are invited to take the survey. The survey asks you questions about:

- Your background
- Your experiences in the Collaborative program
- Your thoughts and feelings towards your school and future career
- Your level of family support and community

This section tells you about the steps of the study, how we will maintain your privacy, and the risks and benefits to you as a participant.

Procedures: ICF and TEA are asking you to help with their study by filling out a survey up to three times between March 2009 and May 2011. The survey will take between 30 and 45 minutes for you to do.

Privacy: Filling out this survey is voluntary and you may choose to skip questions or to stop taking the survey at any time. To protect your privacy, ICF will keep your personal information (name, date of birth, answers to the survey) and your student school information (graduation, attendance, grades) locked in their office in Fairfax, VA. Your school records will be matched to your answers from this survey so that this study can measure how much the Collaborative program has helped you in school, but your school record will not be changed. The researchers will not tell your teachers, parent (s)/ guardian(s), principal, or friends what you wrote.

Risks and Benefits: This survey includes questions about your experiences with your Collaborative program and some of the questions about your behaviors may be sensitive (for example, whether you were suspended from school or cheated on an exam). TEA will receive the final data from your surveys. Although your individual information will be wiped from the database, your school district may be identified with student survey responses to enable TEA to identify the most successful Collaborative programs.

While there are no direct benefits to you, as a participant in the evaluation, you can benefit from knowing that your contributions will help the overall evaluation of the Collaborative program. At the end of the study, ICF will combine everything students say from all of the schools and then write a report. You will not be identified by name in the report. The report will help improve the program so that other students your age can benefit from the program in the future.

If you have any questions about what's going to happen with the information you provide in the survey, contact Thomas J. Horwood (ICF Evaluation Manager) by e-mail at THorwood@icfi.com or by telephone at 703-225-2276. If you have questions about the project or TEA, contact Candace Macken (TEA Project Manager) by e-mail at ProgramEval@tea.state.tx.us or by telephone at 512-463-7814. If you are upset about something in the survey, contact Suzanne Polkowske (ICF Institutional Review Board Deputy Chair) by e-mail at SPolkowske@icfi.com or by telephone at 703-934-3000.

Collaborative Student Survey

* **1. Please read this statment and say whether or not you agree to participate: "I understand that I have been asked to complete a survey about my experiences with the Collaborative program in which I am participating this school year (2009-2010). I understand that I may be asked to fill out a survey up to three times in the next few years. I also understand that my privacy will be protected and my answers on this or any survey will be used only for this study. I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not want to and that I can stop taking the survey at any time. Finally, I can contact Mr. Thomas J. Horwood (Evaluation Manager) or Ms. Suzanne Polkowske (IRB Deputy Chair) at ICF should I have questions or concerns about this survey."**

If you understand everything explained here and would like to take this survey, please "click" on the circle for "Yes" to indicate that you agree to take this survey. If you would not like to participate, "click" on the circle for "No."

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Collaborative Student Survey

2. Evaluation of the Collaborative Program - Student Survey

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

* **1. What is your first name?**

* **2. What is your last name?**

* **3. What is your date of birth (for example, 10/23/1995)?**

MM/DD/YYYY (MM / DD / YYYY)

* **4. What is the name of your school?**

* **5. What is the name of your school district?**

Page 3

Collaborative Student Survey

3. Background Information

We would like to obtain some background information about you. Please answer the following questions.

1. What grade are you in?

- ◯ 9th grade
- ◯ 10th grade
- ◯ 11th grade
- ◯ 12th grade

2. Is English the main language used in your home?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

3. What is the highest level of education that your parent(s) or guardian(s) completed? (please select one response per row)

	Did not finish high school	High school diploma or GED	2-year college degree (Associate's)	4-year college degree (Bachelor's)	Master's degree	Ph.D. or other advanced professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)	I don't know	Does Not Apply
Father/Step Father	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Mother/Step Mother	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Guardians	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

4. What are your plans after graduating from high school?

- ◯ 4-year college or university
- ◯ 2-year college (e.g., community college)
- ◯ Work
- ◯ Military
- ◯ Apprenticeship
- ◯ Time off
- ◯ Undecided
- ◯ Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Student Survey

5. How many months have you been enrolled in the Collaborative program?

Page 5

Collaborative Student Survey

4. Your Thoughts on School and Behaviors

We would also like to learn more about some of your general thoughts about your experiences in school. Please answer the following questions.

1. Have you ever been in any of the following kinds of courses or programs while in high school? (Please select one circle for each course or program)

	Yes	No
College or university course (at a college/university campus)	◯	◯
On-line course	◯	◯
Worked as an intern for a company or agency	◯	◯
Big Brothers/ Big Sisters	◯	◯
Boys and Girls Club	◯	◯
Continuation High School	◯	◯
Special School for pregnant girls or mothers	◯	◯
Taken the PSAT, SAT, or ACT	◯	◯

2. Fill in the responses that come closest to what level you agree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have the skills and abilities to complete my work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have worked harder than I expected to work in school.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I think it is important to make good grades.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I care about my school.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I put forth a great deal of effort when doing my school work.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have opportunities to be creative in my school assignments.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I think the things I learn at school are useful.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I feel safe in school.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I am challenged to do my best work at school.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Overall, people at school accept me for who I am.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
In general, I am excited about my classes.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is at least one adult in my school who cares about me and knows me well.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My school work makes me curious to learn about other things.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Collaborative Student Survey

3. About how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10+
Preparing for class (doing homework, reading, rehearsing, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Doing volunteer work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Internship/ Unpaid work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Working for pay (including babysitting, cutting grass, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching television	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participating in school-sponsored activities (athletics, clubs, government, newspapers, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Chatting or "surfing" online	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hanging out/ socializing with friends outside of school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Playing video games	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Exercising (not counting school-sponsored activities)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Talking on the phone	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Collaborative Student Survey

5. Your Thoughts on Jobs and Your Future Career

We would like to hear about your thoughts on jobs and your future career. Please answer the following questions.

1. Are you employed at this time?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Collaborative Student Survey

6. Jobs and Future Career

1. Did you do any work for pay last month, not counting work around the house?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Collaborative Student Survey

7. Jobs and Future Career II

1. What is the average number of hours you worked every week in the last month?

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Collaborative Student Survey

8. Jobs and Future Career III

1. In describing your present or most recent job, would you say it is…

	Yes	No
…a place where people goof off?	◯	◯
…something you do just for the money?	◯	◯
…more enjoyable than school?	◯	◯
…encourages good work habits?	◯	◯
…more important for you than school?	◯	◯

2. We would also like to learn about things that sometimes happen at some workplaces. We would like to know whether and how often you engage in the following behaviors in the past month. Please be open and honest in your responses.

	Never	1-3 times	4-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times
Stayed late to work on a task that really needed to be done	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Volunteered for extra work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Intentionally arrived late for work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Called in sick when I was not really sick	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Scheduled meetings with my boss to assess my progress in my job	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Left work early without permission	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Lied about the number of hours I worked	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
On my own initiative, I learned how to do something to help my company	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Purposely ignored my supervisor's instruction	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Bent the rules in dealing with someone (e.g., gave my friends employee discounts)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Worked overtime for my company, even when I was not scheduled to work	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Played games on the computer during work hours	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Collaborative Student Survey

9. Your Family

We would like to hear about your thoughts on your family. Please answer the following questions.

1. Which of the following people live in the same household with you? (please select all that apply)

- ☐ I live alone
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Other male guardian (step-father or foster father)
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Other female guardian (step-mother or foster mother)
- ☐ Brother(s) and/ or sister(s) (including step- or half-)
- ☐ Grandparent(s)
- ☐ My husband/wife
- ☐ My child or children
- ☐ Other relative(s) (children or adults)
- ☐ Non-relatives(s) (children or adults)

2. Are the following statements about your parents or guardians true or false?

	False	True	Does Not Apply
My parents or guardians keep close track of how well I am doing in school.	○	○	○
My parents (or guardians) almost always know where I am.	○	○	○
My parents (or guardians) almost always know what I am doing.	○	○	○

3. How much have you talked to the following people about your schooling?

	Not At All	Somewhat	A Great Deal	Does Not Apply
Your mother	○	○	○	○
Your father	○	○	○	○
Your guardians	○	○	○	○
A guidance counselor	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○
Friends who are about your age	○	○	○	○

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Collaborative Student Survey

4. How much have you talked to the following people about your future career plans?

	Not At All	Somewhat	A Great Deal	Does Not Apply
Your mother	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your father	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your guardians	◯	◯	◯	◯
A guidance counselor	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯
Friends who are about your age	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. What do the following people think you ought to do after high school?

	Go to College	Get a Full-Time Job	Enter a Trade School or Appren-ticeship	Enter Military Service	They Don't Care	I Don't Know	Does Not Apply
Your mother	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your father	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
You guardians	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
A guidance counselor	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Teachers	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Friends or relatives who are about your age	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Collaborative Student Survey

10. Your Community

We would like to hear about your thoughts on your neighborhood and community. Please answer the following questions.

1. Would you say you live in a close-knit community?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't Know

2. When your neighborhood is faced with a problem, do neighbors get together and deal with those problems?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't Know

3. Listed below are a few problems that neighborhoods sometimes have. Please indicate how much of a problem these are for your neighborhood.

	Never a Problem	Sometimes a Problem	Often a Problem	Always a Problem	Don't Know
Housing and property not being kept up?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Vandalism (e.g., graffiti, broken street lights)?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Crime (muggings, robberies, etc.)?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
People drinking alcohol in public?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
People selling or using drugs?	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Collaborative Student Survey

11. Your Thoughts on the Collaborative Program

We would like to learn more about your experiences with the Collaborative program. Please answer the following questions.

1. On average, in the past year how often did you do the following in your classes?

	Not at All	Sometimes	Always
I participated in class discussions.	◯	◯	◯
I asked questions in class.	◯	◯	◯
I worked with other students on assignments during class.	◯	◯	◯
I completed my homework.	◯	◯	◯
I studied for tests/quizzes/exams.	◯	◯	◯
I worked with other students outside of class to complete assignments.	◯	◯	◯
I helped/ tutored other students who were in my class.	◯	◯	◯
I skipped class.	◯	◯	◯

2. How much has your experience in the Collaborative program contributed to your growth in the following areas?

	Very Little	Some	Quite a Bit	Very Much
Learning work-related skills	◯	◯	◯	◯
Writing effectively	◯	◯	◯	◯
Speaking effectively	◯	◯	◯	◯
Thinking critically	◯	◯	◯	◯
Using computers and/or other technology	◯	◯	◯	◯
Working well with others	◯	◯	◯	◯
Learning on your own	◯	◯	◯	◯
Solving real-world problems	◯	◯	◯	◯
Developing career goals	◯	◯	◯	◯
Making your community a better place	◯	◯	◯	◯
Preparing for college	◯	◯	◯	◯
Learning leadership skills	◯	◯	◯	◯
Developing personal values	◯	◯	◯	◯
Attending class regularly	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Collaborative Student Survey

3. After your experiences in the Collaborative program, do you know how to …

	No	Yes	I'm Not Sure
…apply for an office job in a big company?	◯	◯	◯
…choose a school program which will help you in college?	◯	◯	◯
…apply to a college for admission?	◯	◯	◯
…apply for financial aid for college?	◯	◯	◯
…find out about different kinds of jobs?	◯	◯	◯

4. Please indicate whether you have been involved in the following since you joined the Collaborative program?

	Never	1-3 times	4-10 times	11-20 times	More than 20 times
I received a school suspension	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I tried to hit or get into a physical fight with another person(s)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I intentionally damaged private property	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I shoplifted minor articles (e.g., cigarettes, magazines, clothes)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I shoplifted major articles (i.e., over $100 in value)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I hid a firearm or knife on my person while outside my home	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I cheated on a test or exam	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

5. Overall, would you say that the Collaborative program helped you in school? If so, what are some of the ways in which the Collaborative program helped you?

6. Overall, would you say that the Collaborative program helped you in your career? If so, what are some of the ways in which the Collaborative program helped you?

7. Are there things about the Collaborative program that you think did not work or could be improved? If so, what are those things?

8. Is there anything else about the Collaborative program that you wanted to mention?

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Collaborative Student Survey

12. Thank you for your time!

Please be sure to click the "Done" button to submit your answers.

Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

1. Introduction

ICF International, in conjunction with the Texas Education Agency, requests your participation in the evaluation of the Collaborative Dropout Reduction (Collaborative) pilot program. As a partner with the Collaborative program during the 2009-2010 school year, you are being asked to respond to a series of survey items related to the following topics:

- General information about your relationship with the Collaborative program,
- The implementation of your Collaborative program(s), and
- Cooperation with the Collaborative district.

We are conducting surveys with at least one representative from each of the Collaborative Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 grantees. Findings from this survey and others like it will help us to learn about the ways in which the Collaborative program is effective and alert evaluators and program managers to areas for possible program improvements.

In the paragraphs below, we summarize the procedures of the evaluation, how we will maintain your confidentiality, and the risks and benefits involved in participating in this evaluation.

Procedures: TEA has partnered with ICF International to conduct the Collaborative evaluation. This survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. By participating in the survey, you are giving permission for ICF International to use your information for evaluation purposes. ICF may ask you to complete other surveys up to two additional times between May 2010 and May 2011.

Confidentiality: Participation in this survey is completely voluntary for you and you may choose to skip any questions you do not want to answer or to terminate your participation at any time, without consequence. While TEA is aware that Collaborative partners are participating in this survey, the information gathered from this survey is strictly confidential and will be used for the purposes of this evaluation only. The data collected from this survey, and others like it, will be entered into a database, analyzed, and used in reports on the effectiveness of the Collaborative program.

Any identifying information that you provide will not appear in any databases or reports associated with this evaluation. Specifically, any quotations you provide to open-ended questions that are used in reporting will be de-identified so that you or other individuals will not be able to be singled out based on the information that you provide.

Risks and Benefits: Because this survey includes questions about your experiences with the Collaborative program and does not include personal information, there are minimal risks posed to you for participating in this survey. While there are no direct benefits to you specifically, as a participant in the evaluation, you can benefit from knowing that your contributions will help the evaluation of the Collaborative pilot program.

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Thomas J. Horwood (ICF Evaluation Manager) by e-mail at THorwood@icfi.com or by telephone at 703-225-2276. If you have questions about the project or TEA, please contact Candace Macken (TEA Project Manager) by e-mail at ProgramEval@tea.state.tx.us or by telephone at 512-463-7814. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Suzanne Polkowske (ICF Institutional Review Board Deputy Chair) by e-mail at SPolkowske@icfi.com or by telephone at 703-934-3000.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Page 1

Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

* **1. Please read this statment and say whether or not you agree to participate: "I understand that I have been asked to complete a survey about my experiences with the Collaborative program in which I am participating this school year (2009-2010). I understand that I may be asked to fill out a survey up to two more times in the next few years. I also understand that my privacy will be protected and my answers on this or any survey related to the Collaborative evaluation will be used only for this study. I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I do not want to and that I can stop taking the survey at any time. Finally, I can contact Thomas J. Horwood (Evaluation Manager) or Ms. Suzanne Polkowske (IRB Deputy Chair) at ICF should I have questions or concerns about this survey."**

If you understand everything explained here and would like to take this survey, please "click" on the radio button for "I accept" to indicate that you agree to take this survey. If you would not like to participate, "click" on the radio button for "I do not accept."

- ◯ I accept
- ◯ I do not accept

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

2. General Information About Your Program

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

*** 1. What is the name of your organization?**

*** 2. What is the name of your partnering Collaborative district?**

3. Please indicate your organization type from the list below.

- ◯ Local business
- ◯ Local government
- ◯ Law enforcement agency
- ◯ Nonprofit organization
- ◯ Faith-based organization
- ◯ Institution of higher education
- ◯ Other (please specify)

4. For how many months has your organization been a partner with the Collaborative program?

Enter the number of months:

5. Please describe the general types of services that your organization provides to Collaborative students. (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Workforce skill development
- ☐ Academic support
- ☐ Attendance improvement
- ☐ Student and family support services
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

6. What grade levels are served through your Collaborative program? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ 9th Grade
- ☐ 10th Grade
- ☐ 11th Grade
- ☐ 12th Grade

7. What population(s) of students is (are) served by your Collaborative program? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Economically disadvantaged students (e.g., students receiving free or reduced price lunch)
- ☐ English Language Learners – ELLs (including English as a second language, limited English proficient, and bilingual students)
- ☐ Special education students
- ☐ Students at risk for dropping out
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

3. Implementation

1. Please select the types of activities your organization contributes to the Collaborative program. (Select all that apply)

- [ ] Paid employment
- [ ] Internship opportunities
- [ ] Advanced career and/or vocational training
- [ ] Cooperative education program
- [ ] Job shadowing
- [ ] Mentoring
- [ ] Career guidance
- [ ] College preparation
- [ ] Tutoring
- [ ] Credit recovery
- [ ] Dual credit programs
- [ ] Attendance improvement/incentives
- [ ] Health services (mental health, physical health)
- [ ] Parent groups
- [ ] Individual/group counseling
- [ ] Substance abuse prevention/treatment services
- [ ] Juvenile justice
- [ ] Continuing education
- [ ] Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

2. How would you rate the success of your program in helping Collaborative students in each of the following areas:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Does Not Apply
Academic achievement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Behavior	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Vocational skills	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Career readiness	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School attendance	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
College readiness	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Juvenile justice	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

3. What barriers or challenges have you faced regarding the *initial implementation* of your Collaborative program activities? Please explain.

4. If applicable, how have you addressed these barriers or challenges?

5. What have been keys to success regarding the *initial implementation* of your Collaborative program activities? Please explain.

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

4. Collaboration

1. Does your organization have a formalized Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other formal agreement with the Collaborative district?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know

2. If yes: Do you feel that the work your organization has completed to date is within the scope of the MOU or formal agreement?

- ◯ Completely
- ◯ To a great extent
- ◯ Somewhat
- ◯ Very little
- ◯ Not at all

3. If no: Do you feel that you have a clear understanding of your roles and responsibilities in this partnership with the Collaborative district?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

4. How did the partnership between your organization and the Collaborative district begin?

- ◯ The Collaborative district approached my organization.
- ◯ My organization approached the Collaborative district.
- ◯ My organization already had an existing partnership with the Collaborative district.
- ◯ Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

5. What motivated your organization to engage in the Collaborative partnership? (Select all that apply)

- [ ] My organization was already involved in a partnership with the Collaborative district.
- [ ] My organization was interested in serving the student population included in the Collaborative program.
- [ ] My organization wanted to expand the reach of its services.
- [ ] My organization wanted to improve the community.
- [ ] My organization was interested in reducing the dropout rate in the Collaborative district.
- [ ] My organization wanted an enhanced reputation and/or more visibility within the community.
- [ ] The mission of my organization and the Collaborative program are congruent.
- [ ] My organization would financially benefit from the partnership.
- [ ] My organization's employees would gain valuable skills as a result of the partnership.
- [ ] Other (please specify)

6. How would you describe the planning process for partnering and implementing the Collaborative program?

- ◯ The Collaborative district directed the planning process, and my organization was not very involved.
- ◯ The Collaborative district worked with all of the Collaborative partners together and shared in the planning process. (My organization had contact with the other Collaborative partners during planning.)
- ◯ My organization and the Collaborative district worked together and shared in the planning process. (My organization did not have contact with the other Collaborative partners during planning.)
- ◯ My organization directed the planning process, and the Collaborative district was minimally involved.
- ◯ Other (please specify)

7. Do you feel that you understand the goals of your partnership with the Collaborative district?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No
- ◯ Partially

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

8. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
My organization has a shared mission with the Collaborative program.	○	○	○	○	○	○
My organization is a good fit for the role it plays in the Collaborative program.	○	○	○	○	○	○

9. How are resources shared between your organization and the Collaborative district? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Services from my organization are donated to the Collaborative district.
- ☐ The Collaborative district pays my organization for services we provide.
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

5. Collaboration II

1. Which of the following best describes your Collaborative program's partnerships?

- ◯ A loosely organized group.
- ◯ A semi-formal group of organizations.
- ◯ A formal group of organizations who plan to act together to implement the Collaborative program.
- ◯ A highly formal arrangement with most organizations having a clear role in the planning and implementation of the Collaborative program.
- ◯ Other (please specify)

2. How often does your organization communicate with the Collaborative district?

- ◯ Daily
- ◯ Several days a week
- ◯ Once a week
- ◯ Once every two weeks
- ◯ Once a month
- ◯ Less than once a month

3. Which types of communication are employed with the Collaborative district? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ E-mail
- ☐ In-person meetings
- ☐ Virtual meetings
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Other (please specify)

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

4. Which type of communication do you believe is the most effective for collaboration?

- ◯ E-mail
- ◯ In-person meetings
- ◯ Virtual meetings
- ◯ Telephone
- ◯ Other

Why do you think this is the most effective type of communication?

5. Does your organization share in decision making processes with the Collaborative district?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

6. If yes: Is there a formal process for making decisions?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Please briefly explain the decision making process.

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

6. Collaboration III

1. How would you rate the professional relationship between your organization and the Collaborative district?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

2. Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Slightly Agree	Slightly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree
My organization is engaged in the recruitment of other partners for the Collaborative program.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The Collaborative program's partnership has a sufficient combination of skills within its membership to achieve the Collaborative program's goals.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The Collaborative program's partnership has established 'credibility' in the community through its ongoing efforts to reduce dropout rates among youth in the community.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Participation in the Collaborative program partnership has generated new ideas for improving my organization's practices and/or services.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is widespread knowledge about the Collaborative program among participating agencies, organizations, and individuals.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is widespread support for the Collaborative program among participating agencies, organizations, and individuals.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is a history of productive interaction among the stakeholders involved in designing and implementing the Collaborative program.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Leaders of participating organizations are willing to commit resources, including staff, for the Collaborative program.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

3. There are a number of factors that contribute to maintaining partnerships. To what extent did the following contribute to maintaining your organization's partnership with the Collaborative district?

	To a Great Extent	To Some Extent	To a Small Extent	To No Extent
Having a shared vision	◯	◯	◯	◯
Having a history of collaboration	◯	◯	◯	◯
Recruiting partnership members from each segment of the community who will be affected by Collaborative activities	◯	◯	◯	◯
Ability to compromise	◯	◯	◯	◯
Meeting regularly	◯	◯	◯	◯
Development of clear roles and responsibilities	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sharing in the decision making process	◯	◯	◯	◯
Community perception of the partnership as competent	◯	◯	◯	◯
Local political commitment and support	◯	◯	◯	◯
Community support	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sufficient resources (i.e., funds, staff, materials, time)	◯	◯	◯	◯
Skilled leadership	◯	◯	◯	◯

4. Are there plans in place to sustain your partnership after this grant ends?

◯ Yes

◯ Not in place yet, but coming up for discussion

◯ No

◯ Don't know/unsure

5. On the scale below, how would you rate the OVERALL success of your partnership with the Collaborative district?

◯ Extremely Poor

◯ Below Average

◯ Average

◯ Above Average

◯ Excellent

Please explain why you selected that rating:

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Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

6. Do you feel that your partnership with the Collaborative district has benefited your organization?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

7. What barriers or challenges has your organization faced regarding your partnership with the Collaborative district? Please explain.

8. If applicable, how has your organization addressed these barriers or challenges?

9. Based on your experience, what are the key facilitators of quality collaboration?

10. Do you have any other information you would like to share regarding collaboration with the Collaborative district?

Collaborative Dropout Reduction Partner Survey

7. Thank you for your time!

Thank you for your time in completing this survey! Your input will help us to learn about the ways that the Collaborative program is effective and to alert evaluators to areas for possible program improvements.

If you have any questions about this evaluation, please contact Thomas J. Horwood (ICF Evaluation Manager) by e-mail at THorwood@icfi.com or by telephone at 703-225-2276. If you have questions about the project or TEA, please contact Candace Macken (TEA Project Manager) by e-mail at ProgramEval@tea.state.tx.us or by telephone at 512-463-7814. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact Suzanne Polkowske (ICF Institutional Review Board Deputy Chair) by e-mail at SPolkowske@icfi.com or by telephone at 703-934-3000.

Please click the "Done" button below in order to submit your survey.

The computer will automatically take you to the TEA website once you hit the "Done" button.

Appendix C: CDR Case Study Reports

Evaluation of Collaborative Dropout Reduction Program - Case Study Reports Overview

Twenty-two of the eligible Texas school districts and open enrollment charter schools were awarded grants over two grant periods by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to design and implement a Collaborative Dropout Reduction (CDR) pilot program. During the first cycle (Cycle 1), six districts were awarded amounts ranging from $130,000 to $250,000 for two years (2008-2010). During the second cycle (Cycle 2), sixteen districts were awarded amounts ranging from $174,777 to $250,000 for two school years (2009-2011). The overall purpose of the grant is to provide strategies for dropout prevention, recovery, and reentry to increase employment and internship opportunities, and to provide continuing education opportunities for students who might otherwise have dropped out of school.

As part of the evaluation of CDR, case studies of six grantees representing school districts and charter schools were included to provide valuable, in-depth information about the following:

- Program structure of the various CDR programs
- Barriers and facilitators of the program implementation process
- Perceived effects of the program on students (e.g., attendance improvement, ethical workplace behavior)
- Participants' thoughts about the future of the project (e.g., changes, sustainability)

To develop a comprehensive profile of these six grantees and their implementation of CDR, data were drawn from multiple sources:

- Grant applications
- Texas Education Agency's Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) (Texas Education Agency, 2008–09)
- Site visits that included individual interviews and focus groups with key personnel (e.g., district staff, community partners) for each of the six CDR programs at their school district or charter school
- Progress reports completed in early 2010

While the case studies identify individual school districts, to ensure participants' confidentiality, names have been removed and quotations de-identified to the extent possible. In the first year (2008–09), ICF visited all five CDR grantees that were serving students (Port Arthur experienced delays in implementation). These case studies are summarized in the CDR Interim Report 1 (December 2010). In the second year, four Cycle 2 CDR sites were selected based on the diversity (or uniqueness) of their service approach, and two Cycle 1 CDR grantees were selected for return site visits.

Perceived Effects of CDR Activities Across Grantees

The interviewed participants (grant coordinators, counselors, teachers, community partners) discussed their perceptions of the effects of CDR program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected these areas:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Academic Achievement

Across the six case study grantees, five grantees noted positive improvements in participating students' academic achievement. One grantee reported mixed results regarding academic achievement. Factors that impacted academic achievement included mentoring, TAKS tutorials, financial incentives, college visits, personal attention from CDR staff, and personal graduation plans.

Attendance Improvement

In all but one case study district, interviewees indicated that attendance rates among participating students improved over the course of the CDR program; however, some grantees reported that a challenge to improved attendance was due to the fact that many participating CDR students were also caretakers for their families which could require time away from school. Overall, strategies to improve attendance across grantees ranged from attendance contracts, financial incentives, and prizes. In addition, one grantee that placed probation officers at each high school campus reported that there were zero absences for students on probation during the second year of CDR implementation. The probation officers monitored the students' attendance rates because attendance is attached to the students' probation requirements.

Improved Behavior

Interviewees across all six case study grantees reported that behavior among participating students improved over the CDR program period. Many of the interviewees believed that the improvement in student behavior was attributed to positive relationships with adults, such as mentors, counselors, and CDR staff. In addition, one grantee reported that over the course of the two-year CDR program, there were zero suspensions; the lack of suspensions was attributed to the college atmosphere created at the alternative school campus where faculty focused on positive moments. Another grantee credited their off-campus setting as a facilitator for improved behavior because students were given the opportunity to complete coursework at their own pace outside of the high school campus atmosphere.

Dropout Rates

Evidence for decreased dropout rates across the six grantees during the case study site visits was anecdotal in all cases except one. One grantee in their second year of CDR implementation halved the number of dropouts after one year of implementation and was on the way towards halving the year one dropout rate after the second year of implementation. The other grantees reported that most of the participating CDR students stayed in school, but did not have supporting data at the time of the site visit.

Course Completion Rates

The evidence regarding improved course completion rates, as with dropout rates, was anecdotal across the case study grantees; however, interviewees indicated that based on participating students' achievement and credit recovery work, it was likely that course completion rates would show improvement.

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

Support to families of students participating in the CDR program improved as a result of the CDR program; however, improvements between students' relationships with their families was difficult for interviewees to gauge. In terms of support to families, grantees implemented different strategies such as hosting parent-teacher meetings in convenient settings for parents, conducting home visits, hosting monthly parent meetings or annual conferences, providing opportunities for parents to engage with guest speakers, hosting special ceremonies for students and parents, and providing one-on-one attention with students' families.

College Readiness

Most of the interviewees commented on students' increased college awareness rather than college readiness. Students' awareness of college across all six grantees increased as a result of college campus field trips and tours, visiting with college representatives, and learning about, and applying for, student federal financial aid. In addition, many of the CDR programs offered students dual credit courses which prepared students for the rigor of college courses. As a result of these efforts, many students were reported as being excited about the prospect of attending college.

Technological Knowledge

Improvement in participating students' technological knowledge was largely accredited to students' interaction with computer programs as part of the CDR program, although most grantees' CDR programs did not explicitly focus on improving students' technological knowledge. Interviewees noted that the CDR programs and school classrooms utilized technology and computers on a daily basis, thereby increasing students' familiarity and knowledge of technology. Many of the grantees used credit recovery programs that offered students a self-paced option for earning credits.

Ethical Workplace Behavior

Interviewees agreed that ethical workplace behavior improved as result of the CDR program. Ethical workplace behaviors were modeled to participating students through mentor relationships, job shadowing, and career workshops. Anecdotal evidence was cited by interviewees to support the

improved behavior such as students learning about how to dress and communicate appropriately at work. In addition, there were very few instances where an employer needed to contact the school regarding a student's behavior. In cases where an employer did contact the school regarding a student's behavior, it gave the CDR staff a chance to work with the student and teach them how to appropriately conduct themselves in a work environment.

Effective Leadership Skills

Interviewees reported positive results in regards to students' development of effective leadership skills; however, the results were anecdotal and often only applied to select students participating in the CDR program. Most grantees indicated that some participating students were developing leadership skills through joining extracurricular clubs, taking an active role in their academic achievement, modeling success to other participating students, tutoring elementary students, and becoming involved in the local community.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

All of the case study grantees reported that students' oral communication skills improved over the course of the CDR program. Only two grantees reported that written communication skills improved. It was clear to interviewees through interaction with participating students that the students' utilized better oral communication skills through increased interaction with mentors, teachers, counselors, and CDR staff. Improvement in written communication skills was harder to judge for interviewees because many of the CDR program components were computer-based and did not require students' to write essays or papers. One grantee noted that students provided strong responses to open-ended question on job applications and during career exploration workshops.

Promising Practices Across Case Study Grantees

Findings from the case studies revealed promising practices that contributed to the overall success of the CDR case study programs. The innovative practices provided below were implemented by the case study grantees and could be easily adopted and modified by future CDR grantees to meet their unique needs.

- *Attendance incentives:* Attendance incentives were utilized by case study grantees to improve attendance rates among students. One incentive strategy grantees used was an attendance contract; the attendance contracts were monitored closely by CDR staff and were signed by students, CDR staff, and, often times, parents. Another attendance incentive strategy used by grantees was the provision of a monetary reward, prize, or early dismissal for participating students with good attendance. Additionally, at one grantee school, students with excellent attendance were invited, along with their families, to an awards ceremony where they were recognized for their attendance records.

- *Other incentives:* In addition to attendance incentives, case study grantees also sought other ways to incentivize students and families. For example, one grantee offered a $50 incentive for CDR seniors who attended TAKS tutoring. The students were required to attend at least 10 hours of TAKS tutoring to qualify for the stipend. Another grantee encouraged parents to give permission for their children to participate in the CDR program by hosting a dinner for students and their families that "made it like an honor" to be selected for the program. An additional incentive for some students was access to dual-credit courses that would have been out of reach due to financial limitations.

- *Opportunities for paid employment:* At some grantee districts, participating CDR students were provided opportunities for paid employment such as tutoring elementary students or working in fields that aligned with their career interests. One barrier to paid employment was the age of students in the program, as many jobs required students to be at least 16 years old. An additional barrier identified was immigration status; students who did not possess proof of citizenship could be denied jobs.

- *Communication:* Good communication between district staff, school staff, community partners, and with students was essential to the success of the CDR programs. One grantee promoted good communication by convening all CDR district and school staff once a week; additionally, the external community partners met with CDR district and school staff once per month. This ongoing communication allowed the community partners to provide feedback to district/school personnel. Another grantee developed a computer-based system that sent alerts to counselors and assistant principals when participating students were absent or when their grades fell below a certain point, thereby enabling the counselor to immediately intervene and speak with students. Similarly, another grantee faced with the challenge of high student mobility implemented monthly CDR staff meetings to promote networking among campuses and to update student lists and track participating students.

- *Virtual Learning:* One grantee successfully utilized virtual learning technology as a component of the CDR program. Through NovaNET, a comprehensive online courseware program, the grantee implemented virtual learning programs, such as Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology, and Academics and Virtual School Programs (VSP), that regularly monitored student progress towards high school completion. NovaNET allowed teachers to check their students' progress virtually through usage logs maintained by the software program. These usage logs allowed the students' teachers to see how much time each student spent in their courses and what the students were working on within each course. Each student's work could be seen in real time, so support could be focused for each student's needs as they arose. VSP student/teacher meetings were held twice per week to ensure that any barriers, whether academic or personal, were resolved quickly. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-program student participant surveys that assessed changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding school completion and job attainment.

- *Removing "dropout" from the program title:* One grantee acknowledged that the word "dropout" had negative connotations for students and parents. In order to combat the stigma attached to "dropout," the grantee renamed their CDR program to the High School Success Program (HSSP).

Conclusion

Overall, each of the six case study grantees reported positive outcomes for participating students as a result of implementing the CDR program; however, most of the evidence used to determine the positive outcomes by students was anecdotal in nature. While anecdotal evidence is not typically considered rigorous evidence, it was clear from the interviewees that the CDR program was successful across the case study grantees and that students benefited from their participation in the program. Attendance improvement and improved behavior were areas with the strongest and most measurable student outcomes.

Following are individual case study reports from each of the six case study grantees.

Case Study Report: Plainview Independent School District (Rural)

In March 2010, evaluators conducted a two-day site visit at Plainview Independent School District (Plainview ISD), a rural district in northern Texas. As a Cycle 2 grantee, this was the first site visit to document the district's high school and alternative school participation in CDR. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the district grant coordinator; principals, teachers, and counselors from both schools; and seven community partners. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about CDR program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, Plainview ISD's grant application and most recent progress report were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Plainview ISD Characteristics

A summary of Plainview ISD's CDR program including schools, student grade-level, and number of students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table C1.

Table C1

Summary of Plainview ISD's CDR program

Community Type	Rural
Grades of Students Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	2
Type of Schools Served	1 High School, 1 Alternative School
Number of Students Served	300
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	4/1/2009
End Date	2/28/2011

Source: Grant Application

Schools

Plainview ISD's students are predominantly Hispanic, and over two-thirds (70%) of the district's population is economically disadvantaged with 54% at risk. While its Hispanic population comprises a much larger percentage of the overall student body than the state average, Plainview ISD has a lower percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students (Table C2). Of the two schools funded by CDR, one is a mainstream school for the general population, and the other is an alternative school servicing the needs of students whose schedules do not fit with mainstream scheduling.

Table C2

Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2008–09)

Campus Name	*Race/ Ethnicity*			*Risk Factors*			
	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Houston School (alternative)	6.5%	74.0%	19.5%	58.4%	2.6%	97.4%	89.0%
Plainview High School	8.5%	51.0%	38.9%	53.1%	3.4%	50.7%	22.1%
Plainview ISD	5.2%	73.6%	20.4%	69.6%	8.4%	54.0%	21.5%
Texas	14.2%	47.9%	34.0%	56.7%	16.9%	48.3%	19.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Overview of Plainview ISD CDR Program

According to the grant coordinator, the overall purpose of the Plainview ISD CDR program is to meet the academic, social, and career readiness needs of the students by providing a range of support services and activities. The program aims to reduce dropout rates through interventions that bring in community businesses and local colleges to help students graduate and gain valuable skills. The skills that students acquire through CDR program's extracurricular activities, academic supports, and workforce development opportunities will be useful as they transition from high school to the workforce or college.

Program Structure[43]

As part of its implementation of CDR, Plainview ISD has developed a series of initiatives and partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and colleges in the following areas: workforce skills development, academic support, attendance improvement, and student family support.

Based on TEA's 13 at-risk indicators[44] and input from principals, teachers, and counselors, the grant coordinator developed a list of students eligible for participation in the grant program. Schools then

[43] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

[44] A complete list of these 13 at-risk indicators can be found on TEA's Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) Data Standards website: http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/peims/standards/wedspre/index.html?e0919

sent out letters to parents informing them of their child's selection and asked them to provide consent for their child's participation (if the child was under 18 years old). Once parental consent was obtained for students under the age of 18, the student became a part of CDR. Students who were 18 years old, or older, were given the choice to accept or decline participation in the program. The grant coordinator aimed to sustain parent involvement and awareness through monthly newsletters sent to students' homes.

In order to minimize the stigma attached to the term "dropout," the grant coordinator and district staff generally refer to CDR as "Kids for Academic Progress and Skills" (KAPS), a name that focuses on academic progress rather than dropout reduction.

Given the differing needs and schedules of students at the two schools, grant activities vary for each school's participants. Although these grant activities engage students across all grade levels (9 through 12), the majority of grant programming focuses on juniors and seniors. As the grant coordinator noted, "that is when if they're not successful on TAKS, [students] decide they can't do it anyway and that's when they drop out."

To manage activities in each of the grant's four areas (workforce skills development, academic support, attendance improvement, and student family support), the grant coordinator appointed staff members to specific areas. For instance, within the academic support area, the grant coordinator collaborated with one counselor on dual credit opportunities available to students and with department heads to schedule TAKS tutorials for students. In the area of workforce skills development, however, the grant coordinator oversaw the programming and cultivated relationships with community partners.

CDR Partners

Plainview ISD's initiative is supported through ten CDR partnerships. Partners include a local university, a local community college, a hospital, banks, and various businesses. CDR partners provide support in a range of ways, from the provision of funds to services such as mentoring and training. One business provides both funds and the use of space to host parent-teacher conferences, thereby allowing parents to become more deeply engaged in their children's education. Another business volunteered its staff to serve as mentors to students on a weekly basis. The banks also contribute monetarily and work with the grant coordinator to develop trainings and classes on financial management for CDR students. A number of the community partners are working with district staff and the grant coordinator on a career fair that will both expose and prepare students for the diversity of career choices available to them. The grant coordinator reported that given the number of partners, the amount of contact and collaboration ranged widely, with community partners particularly eager to provide their services as soon as the grant began. Community partners interviewed during the grant noted that the grant coordinator kept them well-informed of ongoing activities and stated that they would often be able to provide more services if only they knew what else the district needed.

CDR Program Implementation

While students at both schools received services through CDR, the nature and types of activities available to each school varied based on the structure of the school day and students' needs. Students at both schools received TAKS tutorials, and parents were invited to attend parent-teacher conferences at a community partner site in order to engage more actively with their children's education as part of the district's family support activities.

The scheduling of students' classes at the alternative school as well as their regular obligations (most often part-time jobs and/or childcare) meant that CDR services focused on assistance with academics (specifically, passing TAKS) and workforce development. Students at the alternative school received nighttime TAKS tutorials to help them graduate, and participated in workforce development workshops provided by the local community college focusing on entrepreneurship and customer service.

Like their counterparts at the alternative school, students at the regular high school received TAKS tutorials as well, but also had a variety of other programs available to choose from (with the options to participate in only one activity or all activities). In the area of extracurricular activities, students could join Lunch Bunch, a lunchtime club that hosted guest speakers discussing issues such as money and financial management to opportunities available at the hospital (community partners would deliver these presentations); or the Cause Club, a service-oriented club that focused on identifying needs of other communities and working on projects to address those needs; or be matched with a mentor. Participating students met with their mentors on a weekly basis to discuss a wide range of issues: from schoolwork to college applications to personal concerns. These activities aimed to engage students in the hopes they would be more likely to come for meetings (and therefore, classes). In the realm of attendance improvement, CDR offered incentives to students who regularly attended classes with early dismissals at 2pm, as well as laptops and money. Students with excellent attendance were also invited, along with their families, to an awards ceremony where they were recognized for their attendance records.

Workforce development available to students at both schools also came in the form of a career fair, which had multiple different sessions providing students with career guidance, résumé preparation, and interviewing practice. District staff worked with community partners to tailor sessions to the needs of students.

Barriers to Program Implementation

District staff and partners were asked to cite barriers they faced throughout the implementation of CDR, and if applicable, what measures they had undertaken to address these. Key barriers included: (1) scheduling, (2) parental engagement, and (3) the name of the grant. Scheduling was commonly cited as interviewees noted the difficulty of accommodating the differing schedules of community partners, students, and the schools. Both principals shared that not only was finding time for community partners to visit schools and make presentations difficult, students often were not willing to stay for such activities (i.e., trainings, workshops, etc.) or could not stay due to work shifts or childcare. One community partner, despite having many students' parents on staff, shared that it was difficult to convince parents to come to parent-teacher meetings about their children. Parental reticence was largely due to scheduling conflicts with their work schedules. Another barrier cited by counselors and teachers was the name of the grant and the stigma attached to being associated with a "dropout reduction" program. District staff aimed to reduce the stigma by referring to participants as "KAPS kids," but counselors noted that students did not want to be part of a program that would label them as potential "dropouts."

Facilitators of Program Implementation

While the district had identified components that successfully guided program implementation in their progress report, conversations with district staff members and community partners provided additional insight into the role of these facilitators. Awareness was the key facilitator cited by both district staff and community partners as integral to successful program implementation. The high school principal noted that keeping students aware of the opportunities and activities available to them was critical, a point that a teacher explained had created trust between students and the school. This awareness partially stemmed from forms distributed by district staff to students when they were first identified for the program. The forms listed all available activities and students were encouraged to select all those in which they were interested. High school counselors also noted that the mentorships had fostered positive relationships between the students and mentors, and teachers agreed that participating students have now found a "niche" for themselves within grant activities. Some community partners noted that an awareness of the district's needs and ways they could assist in meeting those needs were critical to facilitating program success. They attributed their knowledge of grant developments to communications from the grant coordinator in the form of in-person meetings and emails. Additionally, community partners believed that sharing their resources and delivering presentations on a variety of topics to participating students were instrumental in supporting CDR.

Relationship between CDR Staff and Students

Since the inception of CDR at the high school, counselors, teachers, the grant coordinator, and the principal have highlighted the positive relationships that have developed between teachers, students, and mentors from the community. Teachers interviewed reported that these relationships have grown due to participating students' realization that the program and the school are there to service student needs. One teacher noted that students now routinely seek her out for advice on who they should speak with regarding next steps, and actively engage her in asking for particular speakers and employers to come to the school.

Perceived Effects of CDR Activities

The grant coordinator, counselors, and teachers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected the areas listed below:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates

> ***"We're not really their mentors, but we become their mentors, [and] they become their own mini-mentors. That collaboration, [whether] at a peer level or a teacher level – that's huge. Some [students] have never had that relationship."***
>
> - Teacher

- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed below, and it should be noted that many of them are more relevant to students at the high school than at the alternative school, due to the number of individuals from each school interviewed and the nature of their relationships with students. More members of the high school staff were available for interviews and had cultivated closer relationships with students through the broad array of CDR programs they managed. As a result, they were able to provide more insight than their alternative school counterparts, who had fewer interactions with students.

Academic Achievement

The grant coordinator indicated that CDR helped students' academic achievement by funding the TAKS tutorials and believed the mentoring relationships had a positive influence on academic achievement as well. With TAKS tutorials, 67 students (72.7%) involved in CDR successfully passed their assessments. With regards to the mentorships, students always attended school on days they were scheduled to meet with their mentors, thereby increasing attendance and potentially positively influencing grades. The counselors reported an increase in dual credit classes that CDR students have taken and noted that juniors and seniors have successfully completed more college hours than in past years.

Attendance Improvement

Although district staff said there was no official documentation of improved attendance at the time of the site visit, one counselor stated that students tried not to miss school so they could win one of the prizes available, and others have asked what types of absences would not count against their attendance records. Teachers corroborated these observations, sharing that attendance in their classes was better, thanks in part to the award system and incentives. Through their interactions with CDR participants, some of the community partners felt that attendance had likely improved.

Improved Behavior

Evidence of students' improved behavior came through a decrease in behavior referrals and teacher observations of changed behavior in participating students. Teachers mentioned that they had expected certain students to be less willing to participate in some of the grant activities, and were surprised when these students proactively engaged in volunteering opportunities. Teachers noted that students' active engagement and participation reminded the teachers to be more open-minded about the students' capabilities. Community partners noted that based on the feedback they had received from the school, they felt students' behaviors had improved.

Dropout Rates

According to the grant coordinator, dropout rates have been on the decline, although some of this improvement occurred prior to the implementation of CDR. Teachers and counselors both stated that it was too early at the time of the site visit to make any definitive conclusions, but one counselor felt an unofficial look at the numbers would yield lower rates for the academic year.

> ***"I never dreamed that some of these kids would have the confidence to ask about scholarships and ask 'how do you go to college?'"***
>
> - Teacher

Course Completion Rates

The grant coordinator noted that students were completing their courses and doing well with credit recovery. One teacher had heard that dropout rates were lower, and inferred that more courses were therefore being completed.

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

One counselor said that at the beginning of CDR, students' parents were not cognizant of the benefits the program provided to their children. To combat this issue, one district staff member explained the different program activities and the opportunities for parental involvement through attending parent-teacher conferences and enlisting assistance in the completion of financial aid forms. As a result, parents began asking how they could register their children for the program. Teachers who participated in the parent-teacher conferences at a community partner site highlighted parents' excitement that the conferences would be more conveniently located and scheduled and their newfound ability to access their children's attendance and grade records online. One community partner who hosted the parent-teacher conferences cited an example of a relative who learned of a student's low attendance rates from a school conference. The relative noted that he was fairly certain the student was no longer missing classes, due to the relative's intervention and the student's enrollment in CDR.

College Readiness

Counselors at the high school reported that more students have enrolled in dual credit classes, and their ability to do so has encouraged them to seek out scholarships and grants for college. Teachers affirmed these observations and credited increased college awareness to the number of sessions by different visiting colleges and conversations with students about available college opportunities.

Technological Knowledge

While the grant coordinator noted that CDR's emphasis was not on technology, a counselor and a community partner provided anecdotes demonstrating a few individual cases of improvements in technological knowledge. The counselor shared the story of a student who earned a graphing calculator through the grant's attendance incentives and was excited to read the manual to learn how to use it. The community partner expressed admiration at noticeable differences in students' computer skills after working with them.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

CDR aimed to improve students' ethical workplace behaviors through workforce courses and workshops. Teachers attested to the success of the workshops, recounting a conversation they overheard between two students, one of whom had participated in the workshop. The participating student corrected the other student's approach to a work situation, providing an alternate approach that had been taught during the workshop.

Effective Leadership Skills

> ***"There's always a group of students who still need a tie or connection to the school; CDR has brought that."***
>
> -Principal

The grant coordinator noted that while leadership skills were not a primary focus of CDR, some students had nonetheless come away from grant activities with more confidence and improved leadership. The connection between one of CDR extracurricular activites and an existing organization on campus led to increased interactions between students in leadership positions and CDR participants, benefiting the latter. Teachers cited membership in CDR and students' perceived ability to make a difference in the community through the Cause Club as factors in students' increased confidence and sociability. A few of the community partners also agreed that students' leadership skills improved, with one community partner providing the example of a CDR student who worked for the partner's organization. The CDR student is the leader of her department despite being the youngest staff member.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Teachers agreed that they had witnessed an increase in CDR students' confidence in speaking and asking questions about such topics as college. One community partner noticed improvements in communication skills based on interactions with mentees.

Perceived Impact of CDR from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, principals, collaborating partners, counselors, and teacher were asked about the perceived impact of CDR from their individual perspectives. The grant coordinator noted that many of the participating students were uninvolved in school activities prior to participating in CDR and their absence from school would have likely gone unnoticed had they dropped out. Being part of CDR, however, gave these students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and workforce courses – a "hook", as one principal referred to the program – and as a consequence the district has seen discernible positive differences in the participating students. One counselor highlighted the newfound sense of belonging students now have, which helps with students' individual outlook on life. Two teachers spoke to the positive influence CDR has had on the community. According to one teacher, a successful Cause Club project had been featured on the front of a Texas public school newspaper, showcasing the "amazing things these kids were doing." The second teacher shared conversations she had had with some of the students' mentors, during which mentors stated that they had great students with whom to work.

Students. All the district staff interviewed agreed that CDR has been a good experience for participating students. They attributed this to successful TAKS results, attendance incentives and award ceremonies, trainings on workforce development, and trusting relationships fostered with mentors and school staff.

One counselor noted that students were particularly excited about the dual credit opportunities they would not have had access to otherwise due to financial limitations. Another counselor added that student feedback about tutoring and workforce trainings have been positive. The high school principal noted that during the attendance awards ceremony, some of the students were thrilled and "practically moved to tears" by the recognition they received.

Parents. Although feedback from parents was limited, one principal and a few teachers shared anecdotal evidence of parental appreciation for what the schools provide to students. The feedback the principal received was in the form of positive reactions from multiple generations of family members in attendance at an awards ceremony held for students with excellent attendance. Teachers recounted parents' excitement over parent-teacher conferences held in a more convenient location, and subsequently, the ability to check their children's attendance through an online computer program.

Teachers. Principals stated that the teachers were positive about and appreciative of CDR. One teacher who was actively involved in organizing and coordinating CDR events shared that other teachers were eager to help in any way they could, and their feedback on all activities they participated in had been positive.

Principals. Both teachers and counselors affirmed that their schools' principals were very excited about and supportive of CDR.

Sustainability and Enhancement

Although the grant coordinator expressed concern over the ability to provide TAKS tutorials in the absence of grant funds, she and the high school principal noted that other grant activities would likely be sustained with the assistance of the district's community partners. The grant coordinator explained that CDR grant had allowed the district to develop sustaining partnerships with community organizations and businesses, many of whom "want to be able to serve." She continued, stating that she felt the district had not truly "tapped into the ways the community will be involved." Community partners affirmed this sentiment, with one banking partner stating, "we'll do whatever and want to stay involved [because] if we save one student, make one a successful person, we're all better off." Community partners did not limit their sustained support to financial means, with one partner expressing his company's interest in growing their involvement to mentorship and visits to the school.

Conclusion

Overall, the interviewees believed that the Plainview ISD CDR program is successfully helping students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Depending on which school they attended, participating students were given opportunities to develop their workforce readiness skills, enhance their academic careers, and engage more actively through a spate of different activities. CDR students are provided with TAKS tutorials, credit recovery, and dual credit options, which encourage them not only to obtain their high school diplomas, but also help them to believe that a post-secondary education is within their reach. Relationships with mentors from the community and membership in the service-oriented club and/or the lunchtime group serve as connections between students and their education, concurrently exposing them to a variety of perspectives, career options, and preparation to participate successfully in the workforce.

Interviewees reported that CDR students are increasing their academic achievement, attendance, and workforce readiness. Whereas students were previously detached from their education, attendance incentives, mentor relationships, and extracurricular activities now serve as an impetus for students to

engage actively in their high school careers. Teachers and counselors have cited an increasing willingness to participate in activities and enroll in dual credit courses, which have led more students to pursue positively their options for college. District staff and community partners stated that the program encouraged positive behavioral changes in students and led them to aspire to postsecondary education and career options. Funding to continue most of CDR activities can be provided by the district's community partners. The program is valued by participating students, district staff, and community partners.

Case Study Report: Austin Independent School District (Urban)

In March 2010, evaluators conducted a one-day site visit in Austin Independent School District (ISD), an urban district in central Texas. As a Cycle 2 grantee, this was the first site visit conducted at Eastside Memorial High School, a campus that consists of Eastside Memorial Green Tech High School and Eastside Memorial Global Tech High School. Eastside Memorial High School (including both campuses) participates in CDR. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the vice principal, grant coordinator, principal, and one teacher. A focus group was conducted that included a dropout prevention specialist, a counselor, and a parent support specialist. Two community partners were interviewed on-site and an additional community partner was interviewed via telephone. The case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about CDR program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from Austin ISD's CDR Progress Report and Grant Application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Austin ISD Characteristics

A summary of Austin ISD's CDR program including schools, student grade-level, and number of students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table C3.

Table C3

Summary of Austin ISD's CDR program

Community Type	Urban
Grades of Students Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	1 (with two campuses)
Type of Schools Served	Public High Schools
Number of Students Served	200
Grant Amount	$249,999
Start Date	4/1/2009
End Date	2/28/2011

Source: Grant Application

Schools

Eastside Memorial High School campus consists of predominantly Hispanic students with a higher proportion of economically disadvantaged and at-risk students than the district and state. The campus also has a higher mobility rate than the district (Table C4).

Table C4

Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2008–09)

Campus Name	*Race/ Ethnicity*			*Risk Factors*			
	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Eastside Memorial High School*	16.6%	82.7%	0.6%	89.8%	23.5%	90.4%	8.4%
Austin ISD	11.7%	58.8%	25.8%	62.7%	29.2%	57.4%	3.6%
Texas	14.2%	47.9%	34.0%	56.7%	16.9%	48.3%	19.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

** Includes New Tech High and Global Tech High*

Overview of Austin ISD CDR Program

The overall purpose of the Austin ISD CDR is to meet the needs of the students by identifying job and paid internship opportunities with businesses that promote regular school attendance and academic success. The program is designed to help potential dropouts through an intervention that brings in community businesses and local colleges to help the students graduate and gain valuable skills. The technological knowledge, ethical workplace behaviors, effective leadership skills, and oral and written communication skills the students acquire at Austin ISD's Eastside Memorial campus will be useful as they enter the workforce or attend college.

Program Structure[45]

Austin ISD's Jobs, Inc. program is a three-year old initiative focused on workforce skills development and employment needs of students. The CDR grant allowed the initiative to expand by serving additional students and adding academic support and attendance strategies and activities. Formerly Johnston High School, Eastside Memorial High School was recently restructured to include two independent high school campuses: New Tech High and Global Tech High. In 2008, TEA ruled that Johnston High School be closed or restructured based on five consecutive years of inadequate performance on accountability measures. As a result, Austin ISD repurposed Johnston High School. Jobs, Inc. was integrated with the redesign program and supplemented activities related to Career and Technical Education (CTE) and workforce preparation. The redesign effort, in conjunction with CDR, may explain improvements at Eastside Memorial High School.

[45] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

CDR at both of these high schools focuses on preparing students for postsecondary educational and career opportunities. Specifically, there is a focus on training students for jobs in the environmentally sustainable building industry. This places Austin ISD at the forefront of training youth for productive work in an emerging industry and aligns well with the City of Austin's position as a leader in "green-tech" engineering and construction trades.

Students began their participation in CDR by attending workforce training for three weeks for 45 minutes each day (for a total of 11.25 hours). Concurrently, students received academic, attendance, and social/emotional support from the district's student support services, including a parent specialist, a dropout prevention specialist, a social worker, Communities in Schools (CIS) representatives, and a Job Inc. program manager. This group, referred to as the IMPACT team, develops student intervention actions, monitors intervention effectiveness, and documents student progress.

Following the three weeks of workforce training, students had access to dual credit and industry certification programs through a CDR partner, Austin Community College. Members of the local construction industry and related industries provide mentoring and job shadowing opportunities. Through a partnership with the City of Austin Housing Authority, students also had an opportunity to participate in paid training to become tutors for elementary students. This opportunity served to further strengthen high school students' reading and leadership skills, while providing academic support for struggling readers.

As a highly effective support service team, Jobs Inc. and Eastside Memorial High School are committed to providing the following for their students:

- Implement an academic contract that specifically outlines the expectations for the student's performance and the consequences if the student fails to improve performance
- Seek assistance from the Reading Specialist, if appropriate
- Establish a consistent time and place to complete homework
- Utilize tutorial assistance from peers, staff or an adult mentor
- Hold parent conferences

CDR Partners

This initiative is supported through a number of CDR partnerships including partnerships between Austin ISD staff, local community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education. The grant coordinator shared that the partners were invited to participate in CDR because of their expertise. For example, Community Mentor Protégé Initiative (CMPI) is entrenched in the construction business in Austin and the Austin Housing Authority already had an established tutoring program.

As an attempt to respond to the needs of individual students whose interests did not align with community partners already in place, Austin ISD added new community partners to CDR over the course of the year. The district added the K-9 Hilton as a community partner because one student noted in his survey that he loved animals and wanted to be a veterinarian. The Wet Seal clothing store was also added, as was Subway, Sam's Wholesale, and an Austin background check company. These community partners were added in order to provide additional employment opportunities for students participating in CDR.

According to the grant coordinator, Eastside Memorial High School has a very positive relationship with its community partners. The partners know the history of the school and want to help. There is communication between the community partners and the school on attendance and grades of the working students. CMPI meets with school staff every Monday, and the rest of the external partners involved with the program meet with district staff once per month. On-going communication allows community partners to provide feedback to school personnel.

Program staff planned to host a career fair at the end of the school year for the participating students, to be set up and run by several of the students from CDR. The students are in charge of organizing, setting up, and mobilizing the career fair. The students are taking ownership because they feel responsible for the success of the fair. The grant coordinator provided an example of a student taking initiative, stating, "One student didn't like the term 'job' fair so the students decided to meet to change the title."

CDR Implementation

All Austin ISD staff, including teachers, counselors, administrators, and dropout prevention specialists are responsible for recommending students to CDR. Parents are also welcome to refer their children to the program. When selecting students for the program, a ten-day attendance report is reviewed for patterns. If students have been absent due to work schedules, they are recommended for participation in the program. In order to participate in CDR, a student's parent or guardian must complete an authorization form. Once the form has been completed, a formal intake process occurs for each student. The intake process includes a needs assessment and discussion of the program checklist. The checklist provides the students with the following overview of activities within the Jobs, Inc. program:

- Job exploration and skills/interest matching
- Résumé workshops and interview training
- Linkages to needed support programs and services
- Options provided by CDR partners

The management of grant activities is divided between the grant director and the grant coordinator. The former is responsible for strategic planning and for communication between district programs, while the latter is responsible for the day-to-day operational details as well as communication with external partners. The community partners are chosen based on their expertise and there is constant communication between external partners and staff members, so that improvements can be made as needed.

The dropout recovery efforts in place, such as Diversified Education through Leadership, Technology and Academics (DELTA) and Virtual School Programs (VSP), regularly monitor student progress towards high school completion. Through NovaNET, teachers can check on their students' progress virtually through usage logs maintained by the software program. These usage logs allow the students' teachers to see how much time each student is spending in their courses and what the students are working on within each course. Each student's work can be seen in real time, so support can be focused and on point for each student's needs as they arise. Academic progress is a permanent topic of discussion in the twice-weekly VSP student/teacher meetings to ensure that any barriers, whether academic or personal, may be resolved quickly. Qualitative and quantitative data are being collected through pre- and post-program student participant surveys that assess changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding school completion and job attainment.

Barriers to Program Implementation

While CDR has offered many opportunities to participating students, four barriers were identified. Key barriers included: (1) lack of funding, (2) student age, (3) student immigration status, and (4) transportation. The vice principal and grant coordinator agreed that one barrier to program implementation is a lack of funding. Currently, there is only enough funding to allow students who are living in housing offered by the Austin Housing Authority to be elementary school tutors. The vice principal and grant coordinator stated that they wish they had enough funding to include all participating students to benefit from the tutoring program. In addition to a lack of funding, the age of students in the program has been a barrier, as many jobs require students to be at least 16 years old and a few jobs even require students to be 18 years old. An additional barrier stated by the grant coordinator has been immigration status. Students who do not possess proof of citizenship can be denied jobs. Due to the complex nature of these barriers, the school has not been able to determine appropriate solutions. However, one barrier reported by the vice principal has been solved. The vice principal mentioned that there was an inability to provide adequate transportation for students to their jobs due to bus scheduling conflicts. One community partner, Communities In Schools (CIS), alleviated this barrier by offering to provide transportation to students from the school to their job sites.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

Jobs Inc. and Eastside Memorial High School are committed to helping all students achieve academic success and stay in school through graduation. Key facilitators included: (1) a teen talk show, (2) tutoring, and (3) the IMPACT team. The vice principal stated that one way program implementation is facilitated is through the school's "Teen Talk Show" that discusses pertinent issues such as teen pregnancy, attendance, and other risk factors that may contribute to students dropping out. The vice principal shared that, since the participating students are the writers and editors of the show, there has been marked improvement in their communication and writing skills. Also, as mentioned earlier, participating students who live in the Austin Housing Authority are tutoring elementary school students and this has been shown to improve their leadership skills.

Another facilitator on campus is the IMPACT team, which provides a myriad of student support services. Staff members who participate in the IMPACT team include the following individuals:

- Parent specialist
- Dropout prevention specialist
- Administrator
- Counselor
- School improvement specialist
- Social worker
- Communities In Schools representatives
- Job Inc. program manager

The purpose of the IMPACT Team is to examine and review student performance issues and provide and monitor interventions for students experiencing attendance, academic, and/or behavior challenges not

effectively addressed with classroom teacher interventions. IMPACT team members work together to develop student intervention plans, monitor intervention effectiveness, and document student progress. The IMPACT team strives to encourage participating students to stay in school by providing the students with the academic support that they need.

Relationship between CDR Program Staff and Students

CDR program staff members have built a positive connection with participating students. The principal stated that the grant coordinator has a strong relationship with the students and has been able to place the majority of students in jobs. According to the principal, the students trust the grant coordinator because she shows them that there is someone on their side who is looking out for their best interests. The principal added that the grant coordinator also has a positive relationship with the community partners as her friendly and outgoing personality lends to making good connections. The teacher reiterated this sentiment, commenting that the grant coordinator meets with students regularly and has built a solid relationship with the students. The focus group participants (dropout prevention specialist, parent support specialist, and counselor) agreed that communication between staff and students has been great.

Perceived Effects of CDR Activities

During their interviews, the grant coordinator, counselors, and teacher discussed their perceptions regarding the effects of program activities on students. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected the areas listed below:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Academic Achievement

All of the interviewees in the focus group believe that the students have become more responsible and more focused on their academic achievement as a result of CDR. The vice principal stated that there has been a large improvement in academics with the majority of students passing their courses. However, two to three students are still dealing with academic issues. While the teacher agreed that the students care more about their academic achievement, he has not seen a noticeable improvement in grades. The interviewees indicated that the students in the University of Texas Distance Learning School are showing academic improvements. Participating students have become more responsible because, through training and exposure to other professionals' work skills, they have learned that gaining a solid background knowledge will further their success in the working world.

Attendance Improvement

Interviewees agreed that there has been an increase in attendance, but they varied in the degree to which they believe attendance has improved. The focus group participants (dropout prevention specialist, counselor, and parent support specialist) stated that attendance has improved dramatically, while the teacher and one of the community partners believe that there has been only a slight improvement in attendance.

Improved Behavior

Students' behaviors have improved, according to interviewees. The vice principal noted that students now have jobs and realize that they have to perform and act professionally to keep their jobs. The good behavior has also transitioned to the classroom. For example, the vice principal stated that there is "a student who usually had fights in school, but now since the student is working, there are hardly any fights." On the other hand, the teacher stated, "There has been an improvement in behavior, but that could be due to the fact that students are getting older and more mature."

> ***"None of the students in the tutoring program have dropped out of school."***
>
> - Community Partner

> ***"[The students'] mindset has changed – now work leads to college."***
>
> - Community Partner

Dropout Rates

All interviewees indicated that student dropout rates have decreased as a result of the extra support the program gives to participating students who are at risk of dropping out. The grant coordinator and vice principal noted that since the students have started working, they are more conscientious about not missing school and are more likely to call the school if they are going to be out. The focus group participants agreed that dropout rates should be lower now that CDR is in place, although that data will not be available until the end of the school year. Students no longer have to choose between school and work. They can continue to attend school in addition to helping with family finances through the revenue from their jobs.

Course Completion Rates

According to the vice principal, course completion rates are expected to improve. The focus group participants reported that the students have become more responsible as a result of CDR and are more motivated to finish their classes.

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

Many of the interviewees were unsure how CDR has affected the relationship between the students and their families. However, the community partner indicated that CDR has improved family support for participating students as the students' parents are excited by the prospect of their children working.

College Readiness

Students are showing an increased interest in attending college, according to the interviewees. The grant coordinator and vice principal stated that many of the students plan to attend a two-year college, such as Austin Community College, for an Associate's Degree or a certification program. The focus group participants agreed that now that students realize they can work and study at the same time, they are more willing to look at college as a possible option. While interviewees agreed that students have more college awareness, they did not provide any examples of students' college readiness.

Technological Knowledge

All of the interviewees agreed that the students' technological knowledge has increased. The grant coordinator and the vice principal agreed that the students' technological knowledge has improved because almost all of the program activities are on the computer. For example, one program component has students use computers to research possible careers, including salary, training, and educational requirements, allowing students the opportunity to become familiar with advanced technology. The focus group participants agreed that many students are very technologically adept, commenting, "Our school is very hi-tech." One community partner stated, "A few students attended training [provided by Jobs, Inc] over the summer and those students improved their technology skills."

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Interviewees believe that students have been behaving ethically in the workplace, although some interviewees believe that there is still more work that needs to be done. An example of this was provided by one teacher, who stated, "Yes, being in the workplace has decreased the students' use of profanity." One community partner agreed with the teacher and announced, "Ethical workplace behavior has gotten better. The students are better able to hold things in and share it at a more appropriate time as opposed to blurting out. There is more behavior control." The grant coordinator noted that while improving ethical workplace behavior is challenging, CDR has given the school the opportunity to correct instances of bad behavior. The grant coordinator stated, "There has been only one instance of negative feedback on a student from the employer, and they told us what we needed to work on with him."

> ***"The students' parents seem to have more respect for [their children] because they are working."***
>
> - Community Partner

Effective Leadership Skills

Interviewees agreed that building student leadership skills is a gradual process. The focus group participants noted that when the participating students learn to work effectively with employers, customers, and colleagues, they are better equipped to express themselves and become leaders. The vice principal added, "The students that are tutoring have a responsibility to the elementary student; those little kids are looking up to them."

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Each of the interviewees agreed that oral communication skills have improved. One community partner stated, "During their weekly meetings at lunch, the students are able to communicate their ideas and thoughts better." The interviewees were not as confident that the students' written communication skills have improved. The focus group participants and the teacher believe that there has not been enough time to accurately determine the extent to which written communication skills have improved and the vice principal added that they would, "see more when the 'Teen Talk Show' happens." The community partner also noted, "[The students] will also do a personal program evaluation in a couple of weeks; this will show if there has been marked improvement."

Perceived Impact of CDR from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, principal, vice principal, counselor, dropout prevention specialist, parent support specialist, teacher, and two CDR partners were asked about the perceived impact of CDR from their individual perspectives. The teacher stated, "The students have gained a lot of valuable experience from the program. Students might not be good at school, but might do a lot better at work. Hopefully they will bring the skills that they have learned at work back to the high school." The focus group participants agreed that while many students have had trouble with the law in the past, CDR has added structure and direction to their lives. The students now see that they have something of value to contribute to the working world.

> ***"The students didn't realize that they could get school credit for working and CDR has shown them that they can."***
>
> \-
> Principal

Another benefit of the program is that social skills have improved for many of the students due to their participation in the workforce. One of the community partners noted that since most of the participating students are 15 and 16 years old, CDR has provided the students with their first jobs. The students have learned how to deal with the responsibilities that accompany a job and have come to hold themselves and others accountable for their actions. The grant coordinator stated, "The students have an ownership attitude with CDR activities."

Students. Interviewees agreed that the students were skeptical of CDR at first, but as the program progressed, they have seen the program's advantages. The teacher stated, "At first students were confused about what the career preparatory class was, but now they are more interested in it." The focus group participants believe that the students have come to appreciate faculty more. In addition, the principal indicated that the students appreciate the program and the opportunity it provides them to work and acquire school credit simultaneously.

> ***"One student…expressed the idea of wanting to be a manager at work and become a leader."***
>
> -Teacher

Parents. All of the interviewees came to the conclusion that parent involvement has been hindered due to the language barrier. Most participating students' parents only speak Spanish. To combat this problem, the high school offers ESL classes run by a parent support specialist and supports a monthly meeting between parents and the principal. Due to the ESL classes and assistance of the parent support specialist, there have been recent improvements in the participating parents' English skills. Many parents no longer need a translator at the monthly meetings. In addition, an increase in the linguistic ability of participating parents has led to an increased number of referrals to CDR from parents.

Teachers. Feedback from CDR teachers has been limited. The principal explained the lack of feedback by stating, "One of the challenges in a school is that negatives tend to be the focus. So, when things are going well, one does not publicize or want to 'toot' their own horn." However, teachers have been referring students to CDR and as teachers make more referrals, more students are participating and receiving the support and resources that they need to stay in school.

> ***"The administrative staff has been very supportive."***
>
> -Focus Group Member

Principal. The focus group participants agreed that they feel supported by the administration. However, one teacher stated that there has not been much feedback from the principal or the vice principal. The principal mentioned that he made sure to hire an effective grant coordinator and now he has more of an oversight role.

Sustainability and Enhancement

Sustainability of CDR is a priority for Austin ISD. However, the school administrators and CDR partners agreed that without continued funding it would be difficult to sustain the program. The principal stated, "Eastside Memorial High School would not be able to fund the necessary CDR positions without the grant funding. It would be difficult to sustain the program without the funding, especially now that Austin is in a budget-cutting phase and eliminating positions district-wide."

One community partner from The Housing Authority commented on the sustainability of The Housing Authority's tutoring program stating, "The Housing Authority is always subject to funding from HUD (the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development). The Housing Authority would like to continue the program and implement it at every high school that has students who live in public housing. However, this would only be possible if enough funding was provided." The Housing Authority expressed interest in adding a component that would match the students' pay as well as pay the student's stipends. The Housing Authority is looking into writing a grant for this money. The Housing Authority believes the program should continue as long as there is funding and students are interested in participating. Before continuing the program, the Housing Authority would like to see if the dropout rate is decreased and academics are increased. The CMPI community partner is not sure how CDR would proceed if grant funding is taken away.

> ***"Eastside Memorial High School would definitely like to continue the program."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Conclusion

Overall, the interviewees believe that CDR has been successful in helping students who are at risk of dropping out of school stay in school. Students that participate in the program receive academic, attendance, and social/emotional support from a group of student support services known as the IMPACT team. The IMPACT team examines and reviews participating student performance issues and

provides and monitors interventions for students experiencing difficulty. Students in CDR also have access to dual credit and industry certification programs through the local community college. Participating students are exposed to new career opportunities through mentoring and job shadowing opportunities afforded to them by local businesses. CDR provides students with jobs and paid internship opportunities, allowing students to earn money while still gaining credit towards their high school degree.

Interviewees reported that students in CDR are increasing their academic achievement while also decreasing the amount of inappropriate behavior that would lead to suspension. Interviewees also noted that dropout rates have decreased, as students no longer have to choose between school and work. Additionally, it was reported that students are gaining valuable skills in areas such as leadership and communication, and understanding ethical workplace behavior. Students have come to appreciate the program and the opportunities and resources it affords them. The high school staff is also pleased with having CDR, as it is another tool they can utilize to help struggling students. Sustaining CDR after the grant period is very important to the district and the interviewees; however, without grant funding, sustainability will be difficult. This program is highly valued by all of the participants and, according to interviewees, has provided positive results that will change lives.

Case Study Report: Brownsville Independent School District (Urban)

A two-day site visit at Brownsville Independent School District (Brownsville ISD) took place in April 2010. Brownsville ISD is an urban school district located in southern Texas. Brownsville ISD is a Cycle 1 grantee that also participated in a site visit in April 2009, and this site visit was conducted as a follow-up to capture information about changes made since last year. Like last year, five public high schools and two alternative schools participated in CDR. The site visit team conducted interviews with the grant coordinator, three dropout teams from three different high schools, and one alternative school principal; the site visit team also conducted focus groups with assistant principals and probation officers from each of the five participating high schools.[46] The high school dropout teams varied across schools but generally consisted of a school administrator, counselors, dropout specialists, a probation officer, a social worker, and sometimes teachers. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about CDR program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, sustainability, and any changes from the first year of implementation. In addition, data from Brownsville ISD's most recent progress report and grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Brownsville ISD Characteristics

A summary of Brownsville ISD's CDR program including schools, student grade-level, and number of students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table C5.

Table C5

Summary of Brownsville ISD's CDR program

Community Type	Urban
Grades of Students Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	7
Type of Schools Served	5 High Schools; 2 Alternative Schools
Number of Students Served	500
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	8/1/2008
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

[46] The dropout team interviews were each conducted as a group interview.

Schools

With the exception of Hanna High School, the high schools selected by Brownsville ISD to participate in CDR have a significantly higher proportion of at-risk (66-81%) and economically disadvantaged (97-99%) student populations than the state as a whole (48% and 57%, respectively). The participating high schools also have a large majority of Hispanic students ranging from 94% to 99% of the student population. Table C6 presents demographic information and risk factors for the targeted schools.

Table C6

Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2008–09)

Campus Name	*Race/ Ethnicity*			*Risk Factors*			
	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Hanna High School	0.1%	94.8%	3.6%	87.7%	9.2%	52.6%	16.4%
Porter High School	0.0%	99.1%	0.8%	98.9%	20.5%	79.7%	22.3%
Lopez High School	0.0%	99.1%	0.8%	99.1%	12.5%	66.1%	22.1%
Pace High School	0.2%	97.2%	2.4%	96.9%	11.1%	66.7%	22.3%
Rivera High School	0.2%	98.6%	1.0%	98.7%	11.7%	80.5%	19.6%
Brownsville ISD	0.2%	98.2%	1.3%	94.9%	35.7%	67.4%	19.2%
Texas	14.2%	47.9%	34%	56.7%	16.9%	48.3%	19.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Overview of Brownsville ISD CDR Program

Brownsville ISD's CDR program has several goals which have not changed since the first year of implementation. The top priority of the program is to keep students in school and give them the skills they need to attend college upon graduation. In addition to staying in school, Brownsville ISD is also focused on decreasing juvenile crime among participating students in these schools. The presence of probation officers on campuses aims to serve as a deterrent and help students already on probation maintain proper behavior. Brownsville ISD is also trying to increase family involvement through increased contact with parents and guardians.

Program Structure[47]

Brownsville ISD is implementing CDR in five public high schools and two alternative schools. CDR structure remained unchanged during the second year of implementation. As previously mentioned, the goal of CDR is to promote college and workforce readiness to at-risk students. Brownsville ISD indicated in their grant application that the dropout strategies incorporated into CDR include: rigorous college preparation, purposeful student engagement with the participating community entities, individualized learning experiences, and structured support systems which seek to assist students in completing their four-year graduation plan and/or with the ultimate goal of enrolling students in postsecondary instruction of higher learning.

The program targets students who are in their fourth year at the high school (though not necessarily in Grade 12) and on probation, students who have dropped out, and students at risk of dropping out of school. The program was implemented during the 2008–09 and 2009–10 school years; however, as the program demonstrates success, Brownsville ISD plans on further expansion if more funding becomes available. Specifically, the program includes English language arts, mathematics, and science curricula with tutorial sessions covering the writing, reading, mathematics, and scientific skills needed for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) and Campus College Readiness Test. The program also has a parental involvement component aimed at increasing parental knowledge of high school standards, college standards, and financial aid opportunities.

CDR Partners

Brownsville ISD continues to have four main partners for CDR: a local university, the local juvenile justice department, the local chamber of commerce, and a county workforce organization. The university partner continues to facilitate Brownsville ISD's instruction of dual enrollment courses. As part of this endeavor, the university provides a *Go Center* station at each of the participating high schools to assist with the college application process. The university also continues to administer the COMPASS E-write test and the Ability to Benefit Test, which enables passing students to access financial aid for college. During the second year of implementation, the university added a "Career Cluster Readiness" program that allowed students to take courses focused on careers of interest while also receiving college credit. The local juvenile justice department continued to provide a probation officer in each participating high school to ensure that students who are on probation participate as needed in tutorial and mentoring sessions. At-risk counselors continue to work with these probation officers to ensure that personal graduation plans for the participating students are developed and implemented. The local county workforce organization continues to conduct application orientation for qualifying students and the chamber of commerce still provides a minimum of 15 mentors for students involved in the program. Students are matched with these mentors based on career interests. In addition, Brownsville ISD partners with a local dropout prevention program that operates in the high schools.

CDR Program Implementation

CDR is implemented in each of the five high schools in the district and has a number of academic and workforce skill development components. In addition to a mentoring program for at-risk students, all participating high schools have a career placement officer dedicated to ensuring that all students have an identified career area. Students that are identified for CDR must meet with each member of the dropout prevention team—usually consisting of a school administrator (generally an assistant

[47] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

principal), counselor, school social worker, dropout specialist, probation officer, and sometimes teachers—before the students are accepted to participate. The dropout team at each high school meets regularly and is in constant communication regarding students and programming. Students are identified for the program by the juvenile justice system if they are on probation or by school personnel.

Participating high schools provide a number of entry-level certifications and students who have room in their schedules can participate in job and co-op classes. Academic components include tutoring, course recovery and reentry, and academic acceleration. After school and/or Saturday tutorials are provided to all students at each participating high school. Course recovery is offered via individualized American Preparatory Institute (API) modules and computer-based instruction through the Student Taught in Alternative Route to Success (STARS) program. STARS is a competency-based, self-paced, alternative program for students who have fallen behind in course credits and/or who may not graduate on or near their projected four-year graduation date. The API modules are Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)-based and approved through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Academic acceleration and reentry is provided at each high school.

Additionally, there is an alternative high school campus that provides a smaller student-to-teacher ratio for students identified as being at risk for dropping out or who had previously dropped out of school. There is another alternative school specifically designed to meet the needs of pregnant students. This school also provides parenting classes and other parenting services on campus. Home instruction services are being piloted for pregnant students who do not want to attend the alternative school. Brownsville ISD also hosts monthly parent meetings that provide information regarding drug awareness, gang awareness, and postsecondary opportunities. Finally, Brownsville ISD hosts an annual conference for participating students and their parents.

Barriers to Program Implementation

Brownsville ISD's CDR program has been mostly successful; however, interviewees did indicate they encountered some barriers to implementation. These included: (1) weaknesses in the district's main assessment tool, (2) high student mobility within the district, (3) lack of trust between students and the district, and (4) parent perception of their children as not at risk. The grant coordinator reported that participating students are improving academically but the improvement is not demonstrated due to a weakness in the district's main assessment tool. For example, if a student has a score of 70 on the assessment tool in the fall and then improves by 10 points in the spring, this improvement does not register because the student was already "passing" when the assessment was administered in the fall. As the grant coordinator stated, "Progress was made, but the tool did not allow for showing this type of progress." Additionally, the grant coordinator indicated that student mobility within Brownsville ISD is very high, which hindered CDR staff's ability to track participating students (the grant coordinator did not have an exact figure; however, Table 2 indicates that there is a 19% mobility rate in Brownsville ISD). As a result, Brownsville ISD implemented monthly CDR staff meetings to promote networking among campuses to update student lists and track participating students.

Another challenge indicated by the assistant principals was gaining the participating students' trust. According to the assistant principals, many of the at-risk students have been treated poorly by the school system or their parents had a bad experience in the school system. So when the students are approached about CDR, the assistant principal said, "They are leery of trusting us. They have been told for so long that they are nothing." However, after building a relationship with the dropout team members through participation in the program, students are developing trust with CDR staff. Another challenge identified by interviewees is that some parents do not see their children as at risk. As one dropout team member indicated, "The biggest challenge is to get the parents to understand that we are here to help their child and to get them to understand that their child needs to be here." To resolve this

issue, CDR staff members are educating parents informally and formally via one-on-one meetings and the monthly parent meetings so the parents are aware of the program and know that CDR is available for their children.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

The successful implementation of CDR continued to hinge on: (1) each high school's dropout team and (2) the relationships between the district and its CDR partners. The dropout teams interviewed from the three high schools visited reiterated during the second site visit that the teams on each campus should remain intact; and that the partnership between the team members is valuable to the sustainability of CDR. As a result of the dropout teams' collaboration, CDR is efficient and effective. They communicate openly with each other and work together for their students. As one team member stated, "We work well together. We are all here for the students to be successful. These students need to hear that someone believes in them."

> ***"At the beginning [of the school year] the students were very timid, but now they have opened up. They are feeling more comfortable about talking about their problems."***
>
> -Dropout Team Member

The strong relationships built between the district and CDR partners over the course of CDR were also instrumental to the success of CDR. During the first year of implementation, the grant coordinator indicated that some of the partners felt territorial and wanted to work more independently; however, during the second year of implementation the grant coordinator reported that, "This year the partners are learning to accept each other's role. [The tension] was resolved by having a shared vision and purpose." The probation officers echoed this sentiment by reporting that the district has welcomed the probation officers "with open arms" and that the probation officers participate in many joint trainings provided by the district and outside agencies.

Relationship between CDR Staff and Students

The relationships between the dropout teams and students have continued to blossom over the course of the two-year grant period. According to the interviewed principal, "The students are very comfortable speaking with the probation officer. The [social worker] is quick to provide resources. Both of these positions are part of our campus. It is running smoother this year because they have set up their network." The consensus of the assistant principals confirmed that the relationship between CDR program staff and students is professional and friendly; the assistant principals indicated that the key to strong relationships is not about being "friends" with the students, but being "friendly" with the students.

> ***"There is a wonderful relationship with the students. Our [dropout team members'] doors are always open and the students send their friends to see us for help. Timing helped foster trust. [The relationship] has changed from last year because the relationship now is more open, positive, and trusting."***
>
> -Dropout Team Member

Perceived Effects of CDR Activities

The grant coordinator, dropout teams, and probation officers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected these areas:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed in detail.

Academic Achievement

As indicated during the first site visit, participating students' academic achievement has continued to improve due to recovering credits. Every student that participates in CDR has a personal graduation plan (PGP) with 97% of participating students on track to graduate. While participating students are recovering credits and participating in fewer remedial courses, the grant coordinator reiterated the issue of measuring academic improvement using the assessment tool utilized by the district (see the Barriers to Program Implementation section for more detail).

Attendance Improvement

As a result of CDR, attendance among the participating students has continued to improve during the second year of implementation. The campus probation officers help get participating students to re-enter school because if students are on probation, their attendance is attached to probation requirements. The grant coordinator reported that there have been zero absences for students on probation during the second year of implementation. In addition, interviewees indicated that attendance has improved due to attendance contracts with the participating students and close monitoring by the dropout teams.

Improved Behavior

According to each of the high school dropout teams, probation officers, and the grant coordinator, behavior has improved among the participating students. One dropout team member stated that the participating students are now less aggressive and are asking the team members for help before acting out. The grant coordinator confirmed the improved behavior by reporting that referrals have decreased over the course of CDR period; however, the grant coordinator did not provide data to verify this assertion.

Dropout Rates

Decreasing dropouts is the main goal of CDR and it appears to be effective through the second year of program implementation. The grant coordinator reported that CDR has had "amazing results" in terms of dropout rates. She stated that when CDR was initiated, the district had 888 dropouts, and then it halved the number of students who dropped out down to 444 by the end of the first year of implementation (2008-2009), and is at 200 dropouts towards the end of the 2009–10 school year. Official data on Brownsville ISD's dropout rate was not available at the time of the site visit and, therefore, was not collected.

Course Completion Rates

The interviewees did not provide detailed information regarding course completion rates during the second year of implementation. However, the interviewees indicated that each dropout team works closely with students to ensure the students are working toward graduation. The grant coordinator reported that course completion rates are "okay" for participating students, but the district is striving to improve the course completion rate.

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

Parent involvement continued to slowly improve during the second year of implementation. One of the dropout teams reported that the biggest challenge in engaging families is that the parents do not understand that CDR program staff members are working to help their children. The dropout teams consequently spend time with individual parents to get the parents to understand CDR and the benefits for their child. In addition to one-on-one contact, parents are invited to an annual conference hosted by Brownsville ISD and monthly parent meetings where information regarding drug awareness, gang awareness, and college information is shared.

College Readiness

During the first site visit, dropout team members agreed that the students were showing interest in college and more students were asking for financial aid information, and this remained true during the second year of implementation. However, the grant coordinator indicated that college readiness is an area of CDR that needs more attention. The grant coordinator planned to work with the local university partner to improve the COMPASS college placement program.

> ***"There is a friendly competition within campuses to see who has fewer dropouts."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Technological Knowledge

The technological knowledge level of the participating students is high. The grant coordinator and dropout team members reported that participating students interact with technology on a daily basis during class. The students are also applying for college using computers. During the first site visit, the local university shared that they had to modify their computer curriculum because the students in public school had more computer technology knowledge than they had anticipated.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Data on improved workplace behaviors continues to be unavailable to interviewees during the second year of implementation. However, high school dropout teams stated that many of the students are working and there have been no complaints from their employers.

Effective Leadership Skills

Participating students are continuing to develop leadership skills while in CDR. As the students take a more active role in improving their academic achievement with the assistance of each school's dropout team, it has promoted the development of leadership skills. In addition, many students are referring other students to CDR.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Communication is a vital component for succeeding in college and the workplace. CDR students are strengthening their communication skills through required tutorials and increased communication with teachers and the dropout team members. The principal also reported that after students are in CDR, they feel more comfortable talking with their probation officers and teachers.

Perceived Impact of CDR from Different Perspectives

During the second site visit, the three high school dropout teams, assistant principals, and principal were asked about the perceived impact of CDR from their individual perspective through the second year of program implementation. Each dropout team noted the value of having a probation officer at the high school in facilitating change in participating students. During the second year of implementation, the probation officers continue to not only bring CDR students who drop out of school back into the school system, but also monitor the students for behavior and academic improvement. Additionally, the assistant principals reported that participating students' attitudes have become more positive. As an example, one assistant principal highlighted the story of one of his female students who had two children and dropped out of school to care for them. The dropout team worked collaboratively to intervene and reenrolled the student. According to the assistant principal, "She is now back in school and making it … Before when a girl became pregnant, the only option was to quit school. Now there are other options, [and] they can continue their education."

Students. The impact on students appears to be strong. According to the interviewees, the relationships that have developed between the participating students and the dropout team members and the success the students have experienced through CDR have led to positive attitudes and better self-esteem. The principal reported that students appreciate the fact that the probation officer is on campus which provides the students and parents easy access when issues arise. Students have said to dropout team members, "Thanks to you, I made it".

Parents. Parents of participating students are grateful for CDR and the access they are provided to the probation officers. Prior to CDR, parents would have to drive to the probation officers' offices which could be a challenge due to transportation issues. During the first and second year of implementation, the probation officer is on campus which has helped a lot of parents in terms of access and transportation. According to the assistant principals, parents are providing positive feedback about the program. Parents of non-participating students have even reached out to the assistant principals to get their children involved in CDR.

Teachers. Communication between the dropout teams and teachers is good in each high school as teachers want to make the dropout teams aware of how participating students are performing in the teachers' classes. The principal also indicated that the teachers are thankful that the probation officers on are campus because it is convenient for their students and the students' parents.

Principals. The school administrators continue to be supportive of CDR during the second year of implementation. The high school dropout teams agreed that the administration is very helpful. As stated by one dropout team during the first site visit, "The principals are very grateful for the program and that the students are getting help for their problems."

> ***"It would be a big problem if we lost the grant. It is so important for our students to have access to the probation officer. I would look for other means to keep the probation officer and social worker if the grant goes away."***
>
> -Principal

Sustainability and Enhancement

The sustainability of CDR beyond the grant period continues to be uncertain after the second year of implementation. Brownsville ISD is expecting to receive additional funding from TEA for CDR, but if that funding does not come through then the district will have to look for outside donations from the private business community to pay for the salaries of the on-site probation officers. The district cannot afford to pay the probation officers' salaries from their coffers. The district and partners are evaluating their options for sustaining CDR.

Conclusion

Brownsville ISD's CDR program continues to be largely successful through the second year of implementation according to the interviewees. Participating students have recovered credits and 97% of students are on track to graduate. As part of CDR, students are paired with mentors and career placement specialists to support them as they finish high school. In addition, students continue to have access to self-paced, computer-based educational programs that help them recover credits and accelerate learning. Each high school continues to staff a dropout team that works to ensure that the program components are being implemented with each partner working together and monitoring students' progress. Students with criminal records continue to have the support of their probation officer on campus that can work with them to reduce recidivism and successfully complete their probation.

> ***"Now the highway of trust is being built and parents are seeing the transition [of their children]. We help with the grey matter – the parents do not know all the programs that are available."***
>
> -Dropout Team Member

Barriers during the second year of implementation ranged from measuring student achievement using the district assessment tool to building trust between participating students and CDR program staff. While the district is still brainstorming ways to measure student achievement, CDR staff have established trust with the participating students by working closely with the students during the school year. Even with the aforementioned challenges, CDR is achieving its goal of keeping students in school. According to the interviewees, students are attending school more often, improving behavior in school, and completing required courses. The students can communicate more effectively and are increasing their technological knowledge. Families of participating students are also benefiting from the program by attending one-on-one meetings with dropout team members and monthly parent meetings. While the future of the program is still uncertain, the interviewees agree that it is benefiting students and they are willing to work together to see it continue beyond the grant period.

Case Study Report: Carrizo Springs Consolidated Independent School District (Rural)

In May 2010, evaluators conducted a two-day site visit in Carrizo Springs Consolidated Independent School District (CISD), a rural district in southern Texas. As a Cycle 2 grantee, this was the first site visit conducted at Carrizo Springs High School for CDR. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the grant coordinator, principal, two Grade 9 teachers, one academic counselor, and two community partners. One community partner was from the U.S. Border Patrol and the other community partner was the assistant manager from First State Bank of Uvalde. The case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about CDR program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, data from Carrizo Springs CISD's CDR program progress report and grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Carrizo Springs CISD Characteristics

A summary of Carrizo Springs CISD's CDR program including schools, student grade-level, and number of students served as well as details of the award are provided in Table C7.

Table C7

Summary of Carrizo Springs CISD's CDR Program

Community Type	Rural
Grades of Students Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	1
Type of Schools Served	Public High School
Number of Students Served	342
Grant Amount	$237,500
Start Date	4/1/2009
End Date	2/28/2011

Source: Grant Application

Schools

Carrizo Springs High School serves predominantly Hispanic students (84%) and no African-American students (Table C8). The school has a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students (73%) compared to the state average of 57%, but lower than the district (79%).

Table C8

Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2008–09)

Campus Name	*Race/ Ethnicity*			*Risk Factors*			
	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Carrizo Springs High School	0.0%	84.1%	15.2%	72.9%	4.2%	50.1%	4.6%
Carrizo Springs CISD	0.6%	92.1%	6.5%	78.7%	7.1%	47.1%	5.1%
Texas	14.2%	47.9%	34.0%	56.7%	16.9%	48.3%	19.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Overview of Carrizo Springs CISD CDR

The overall purpose of the Carrizo Springs CISD CDR program is to meet the needs of the students by identifying job and paid internship opportunities with businesses that promote regular school attendance and academic success. The program is designed to help potential dropouts through an intervention that brings in community businesses and local colleges to help the students graduate and gain valuable skills. The technological knowledge, ethical workplace behaviors, effective leadership skills, and oral and written communication skills the students acquire through this program at Carrizo Springs High School is promoted by the district to be useful as students enter the workforce or attend college.

Program Structure[48]

Carrizo Springs CISD has designed a program that includes a host of comprehensive services to support student success, including the use of an at-risk counselor to provide case management, the coordination and delivery of social supports, increased career and technical education (CTE) offerings, and employment training. Teachers received targeted training to address specific campus needs such as positive behavior support, classroom management, and curriculum/academic training.

CDR at Carrizo Springs High School supports 342 students. Many of these students are single parents who come from low-income homes where education is not a priority. According to the grant coordinator, a high percentage of students from Carrizo Springs High School are on welfare, are at risk of dropping out of school, or are at risk of not passing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exams.

[48] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

In order to deal with these risk factors that students face, the high school has implemented a "flexible" school program. This program is offered to the young mothers and fathers who are in school and need to work in order to support their children. These students have to be referred to the program for admittance by an academic counselor. The admitted students are then required to attend a minimum of two hours of class per day at an off-campus facility. There is also a "flexible" program that is on campus for the working parents who want to stay on campus.

Several other components of CDR have also been implemented. One component is a mentoring program with 10 educators/mentors who mentor 60 students. Another component of CDR is a $50 incentive for CDR student seniors who attend TAKS tutoring. These students must attend at least 10 hours of TAKS tutoring to get the stipend. Along with the $50 stipend, the district has implemented a $25 attendance incentive that requires students to have at least a 96% attendance rate for the year.

Additionally, CDR students are given the opportunity to attend educational fieldtrips, so they can learn how their schoolwork applies to everyday life. There is also an elementary school internship for the participating juniors where the high school students tutor the elementary students (Grades 1–3), help them with arts and crafts projects, or assist with physical education classes. This internship is under the supervision of teachers, and participating high school students can spend up to 15 hours per week in this internship.

CDR also works directly with seniors to help get them prepared for life after high school. The school has a co-op for seniors to assist them in job readiness. In addition, seniors who are parents are afforded the opportunity to attend four evening financial programs where they can meet with academic counselors who help them apply for financial aid for college.

CDR Partners

This initiative is supported through CDR partnerships between Carrizo Springs' staff, local community organizations, businesses, and institutions of higher education. Community partners provide employment, career training and assistance, campus visits, financial aid assistance, distance learning opportunities, as well as support and encouragement to students. In addition, external partners hold informational seminars to students that include information on finance, budgeting, and family support services.

Students are provided with access to employment opportunities through Mi Casa Steakhouse and Botello's Screen Printing and were given career training and assistance as well as employment assistance through Workforce Solutions Middle Rio Grande. Local colleges, including Southwest Texas Junior College at Uvalde and Texas A&M International University, supply students with information and resources on continuing education. Dimmit County and the City of Carrizo Springs offer educational seminars, attendance enforcement, and support and encouragement to students. In addition, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church provides family support seminars.

According to the grant coordinator, Carrizo Springs CISD has a very positive relationship with its community partners. The partners identified to participate in the program already had a working relationship with the school district. The community is small, so the community partners knew each other, the school staff, and many of the students prior to the inception of CDR. The grant coordinator indicated that CDR has built on

> ***"Our partners were actively involved in the planning and implementation of the program and are very eager to participate at all levels."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

that strong relationship between the district and community partners, through the constant communication and meetings between the community partners and the school.

CDR Implementation

CDR is implemented through a joint effort between the grant coordinator, teachers, the principal, and community partners. The part-time grant coordinator is responsible for formative evaluations that include grades, attendance, college-ready course work, college applications, college scholarship information, and college admission for the students enrolled in the program. The grant coordinator is responsible for maintaining accurate data that is shared with the principal on a weekly basis and used for evaluation. Based on the formative evaluation, the grant coordinator and principal met to adjust program implementation to reflect input received from the principal, participants, parents, and community partners.

The part-time grant coordinator also serves as the liaison between the campus staff, principal, and the district's business office. The grant coordinator coordinates efforts with community partners and reports to the principal concerning the status of the partnerships on a weekly basis. The grant coordinator also maintains accurate and up-to-date financial reports and submits these reports to the principal on a weekly basis. All scheduling is drafted by the coordinator and approved by the principal. The principal is in charge of recommending and interviewing potential CDR staff members as well as approving all purchases.

In adherence with the grant requirements, students participate in workforce training activities while receiving academic, attendance, and social/emotional supports. Parent permission is required before students can participate in CDR.

Barriers to Program Implementation

While CDR has offered many opportunities to participating students, interviewees cited barriers to program implementation. Key barriers included (1) transportation, (2) schedule conflicts, (3) time constraints, and (4) small town politics. The district has many students who live 20 or more miles away and come from single-parent, low-income families where education is not a priority. It is difficult to target these students and to ensure that the students get the full range of CDR activities. While these students are encouraged to participate, it is difficult for these students to commit to improving attendance and discipline issues. As well, the long commute for many students is a deterrent to participating in the student and family support services that are offered in the afternoon, or the make-up classes provided on Saturdays. Another barrier for Carrizo Springs CISD is scheduling meetings with the community partners to discuss progress since each partner has different schedules to coordinate. In addition to barriers with the student population and community partners, the grant coordinator has other responsibilities in the district, which limits the amount of time available to oversee the entire CDR program. In addition, since Carrizo Springs is such a small town, politics can sometimes interfere with the relationship between students and staff. While the aforementioned barriers were reported, the interviewees did not provide information about how they have overcome these barriers or possible solutions to these barriers.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

Several facilitators to program implementation were cited during the interviews conducted in the school district and in CDR progress report. Key facilitators included: (1) internships, (2) the incentive program, and (3) relationship with community partners. Students' work skills are being developed due

to hands-on experience as they complete internships and work in the field. Many of these students are learning the importance of proper communication, being prompt, and appropriate dress attire in the workplace. In addition, the school has been working extremely hard to address the low levels of attendance at Carrizo Springs High School. Student attendance lists are now available on the school's website, in newspaper articles, announced at high school weekly meetings, and in flyers sent home to parents. Counselors, teachers, and administrators have assisted with implementing services to improve attendance such as the $25 incentive program for good attendance. Counselors, teachers, and administrators also assisted with student and family support services designated for teen mothers. In addition college awareness programs were offered. Administrators have also assisted in keeping close contact with external community partners. The high school administration held a meeting with a PowerPoint presentation for community partners at the beginning of the school year to discuss the CDR grant and the activities they were offering to students.

Relationship between CDR Staff and Students

CDR staff members have built a positive connection with participating students. The two teachers interviewed stated that the relationship between CDR staff and students was good. One of the teachers commented, "The students know who part of CDR staff is because the [staff] are very visible to the students. CDR staff is very supportive." The principal also indicated that staff and students have a good relationship, but he noted that, at times, small town politics can hinder this relationship.

Perceived Effects of CDR

During their interviews, the grant coordinator, counselors, and teachers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected the areas listed below:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed below

Academic Achievement

All of the interviewees believe that the students have become focused on their academic achievement as a result of CDR. The two teachers interviewed agreed the activities of CDR, including the mentoring program, educational field trips, and guest speakers, have enlightened and given support to the students. The academic counselor added that financial incentives have motivated students to pass their courses.

Attendance Improvement

Interviewees agreed that students' attendance has increased. The two teachers and the academic counselor interviewed noted the financial incentive has led to a significant increase in student attendance levels. The two community partners interviewed did not have concrete information about attendance, although one did mention that they have heard there has been an increase in attendance.

Improved Behavior

Students' behaviors have improved according to interviewees. The grant coordinator explained that a "flexible" school schedule was set up through CDR for the students who need to make up schoolwork and recover credits. These students are given the opportunity to complete coursework at an off campus facility at their own pace. The grant coordinator added that the off campus setting for these students lessened problems with school discipline and improved behavior dramatically. The two teachers and academic counselor agreed that CDR's mentoring program helped the participating students feel that the school was a haven where they could share their problems.

Dropout Rates

All interviewees came to the consensus that student dropout rates have decreased as a result of the extra support the program gives to participating students who are at risk of dropping out. The grant coordinator noted there was a slight improvement with dropout rates, but did not have supporting data yet. The academic counselor and one teacher agreed that more students are coming back to school now that there is an opportunity for make-up work and to recover credits.

Course Completion Rates

According to the interviewees, completion of class work has improved. The academic counselor agreed, reporting that having the "flexible" schedule program within CDR helped the students who could not be on campus the entire day.

> ***"Students are more involved in school with fundraisers, participating on student council, and being more active in high school."***
>
> -Teacher

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

The interviewees agreed that most of the oral feedback from the parents is positive. One teacher stated, "They know they can come to or call on the teachers if they are having issues." In addition, the school holds special nights at the high school for parents of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, as well as a special night for graduating seniors and their parents. Another special night held by the school is an ESL night, where support and guidance is provided to ESL students and their parents. Interviewees feel that CDR has helped families by providing them with this support and information.

College Readiness

Students are showing an increased interest in attending college, according to the interviewees. One teacher shared that the district has many students in the dual credit program. In addition, participating students have the opportunity to visit with college representatives that come to the school and discuss their future college plans. Another teacher shared that the students are now able to take the SAT/PSAT on the high school campus instead of having to set up the tests on their own.

> ***"Students have learned to communicate effectively with their employer."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Technological Knowledge

All of the interviewees agreed that the students' technical knowledge has increased. Both teachers interviewed mentioned that the students' classrooms are technologically advanced. They cited examples of students using iPods, Smart Boards, and a variety of computer programs in their classrooms.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Interviewees believe that ethical workplace behavior has improved. One teacher interviewed cited the CDR mentoring program as an opportunity for students to see how the mentors conduct themselves professionally. The teacher continued by saying, "Through this relationship the students are introduced to and see examples of proper behavior and language."

Effective Leadership Skills

Interviewees agreed that students have become more involved in school and improved their leadership skills. The grant coordinator stated that CDR has inspired students to join other school clubs and get more involved in the school community.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Interviewees agreed the oral and written communication skills had improved. One teacher indicated that students actively participate in class meetings and interact with each other more than they used to.

Perceived Impact of CDR Pilot Program from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, principal, academic counselor, two teachers, and two CDR partners were asked about the perceived impact of CDR from their individual perspectives. The principal noted that a positive benefit of CDR has been the opportunity it has provided for students to attend college. The grant provides money to students for TAKS tutorials as well as mentorship and career counseling opportunities. The grant coordinator added that many of the programs CDR funds, such as the internship and mentoring components of the program, the district would not be able to support on its own. Both teachers and the academic counselor agreed that the incentives have led to a significant increase in attendance. One of the teachers stated, "[Students] received the attendance incentive, had mentors if needed, and if they stumbled along the way, there was an opportunity for them to catch up and all this made for a successful year." According to one of the teachers, another benefit of CDR has been the inclusion of emotional supports. The teacher commented, "The students see that everybody has the same opportunities at school, regardless of who they are." In addition, gaining a grant coordinator whose sole responsibility is to improve student attendance and grades has been a huge help, according to the academic counselor.

> ***"[Parents] know they can come to or call the teachers if they are having issues."***
>
> -Teacher

Students. Interviewees believe that the students see the advantages of CDR. The principal reported that the participating students like the program. The two teachers and the academic counselor added that CDR program aspects such as monetary incentives for good attendance, credit recovery, and mentoring have had a very positive effect on the students. The academic counselor noted that the students have even started keeping track of their own attendance because they are working to earn the stipend that is given to reward students who do not miss more than one day of school.

Parents. All of the interviewees came to the conclusion that parents of participating students understand the importance of CDR. One teacher stated that parents have become more interested in their children's school experience. The parents are interested in the program and the effects that it will have on their children. However, the teacher also noted that while parent feedback has been positive, there needs to be more parent and family involvement. The principal added that some parents are wary about the incentives program as they do not like the idea of paying students to attend school.

> ***"CDR provides motivation for at-risk students and incentives to the students to improve their attendance."***
>
> -Principal

Teachers. Interviewees agreed that the teachers were happy with CDR as a whole, but had issues with some of the program specifics. For example, the principal shared that some of the teachers had issues with the incentives that were part of CDR. In addition, the academic counselor noted that some of the teachers have expressed concern about the "flexible" program. The teachers are worried that the students who participate in the "flexible" program do not receive enough monitoring. The two teachers interviewed agreed that CDR was a positive program for the district because it helped those students in need, whether through credit recovery or mentorship.

Principal. All of the interviewees agreed that the principal was supportive of CDR. One teacher noted that the principal has been helpful with finding additional funding for necessary supplies.

Sustainability and Enhancement

Carrizo Springs CISD is committed to sustaining CDR Dropout Reduction plan. It recognizes that 90% of new jobs that will become available to students in the 21st Century will require a high school diploma and postsecondary education. The district wants to afford the students the opportunity to pursue higher education, so that they can become contributing members of society. The district has made a commitment to sustaining the following types of activities:

- Workforce skills development
- Academic skills activities
- Attendance skills activities
- Student and family support activities

Carrizo Springs CISD plans to sustain workforce skills development by renewing partnerships in the workforce for the benefit of the students. The district will also continue to maintain rigorous classroom standards, monitor grades, and discipline students who enter the high school in order to uphold academic skills activities. Attendance skills activities will be maintained by continuing to monitor attendance in a proactive way and encouraging students to be in class and be successful in their course work. Finally, student and family support activities will be maintained by continuing to pursue solutions for families that allow their students to find work and also attend school.

Carrizo Springs CISD also works hard to maintain CDR and enhance its programs as necessary by continually soliciting feedback, monitoring progress, identifying program deficiencies, and correcting the program deficiencies. By monitoring the program on a continual basis, the school can address the needs of its students as they arise.

Conclusion

Overall, the interviewees believe that CDR has been successful in helping students who are at risk of dropping out of school work towards their goal of graduating high school and attending college or finding work. Students who participate in the program receive academic, attendance, and social/emotional support, while participating in workforce training activities. Services provided to participating students include a mentoring program, financial incentives for maintaining good attendance, financial incentives for participating in TAKS tutoring, educational fieldtrips, and "flexible" school programs for students who are parents and cannot attend regularly scheduled classes. In addition, community partners not only provide students with employment opportunities, but also career training and assistance, educational seminars, family support services, and general encouragement and support to help students stay in school.

Interviewees reported that students in CDR are increasing their academic achievement and attendance rates, due to both financial incentives and support from teachers. Those interviewed expected dropout rates to decrease, as students no longer have to choose between school and work by utilizing the "flexible" school program. Additionally, it was reported that students are gaining valuable skills in areas such as technological knowledge, leadership, and ethical workplace behavior. Students have come to appreciate the program and the opportunities and resources it affords them. Students' parents recognize the importance of CDR and have become more interested in their children's school experience. Sustaining CDR after the grant period is very important to the district and the interviewees, as they feel that it will help students pursue higher education and become contributing members of society. This program is highly valued by all of the participants and, according to interviewees, has provided positive results that will change lives.

Case Study Report: Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District (Rural)

In April 2010, evaluators conducted a one-day site visit in Los Fresnos Consolidated Independent School District (CISD), a rural district southern Texas. Los Fresnos CISD is a Cycle 1 grantee that also participated in a site visit in April 2009, and this site visit was conducted as a follow-up to capture information about changes made since the first year of implementation. Like last year, the district's only high school participated in CDR. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the district grant coordinator, the high school principal, two CDR partners, one teacher at the College, Career, & Technology Academy (CCTA), and two counselors.[49] A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about CDR program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, sustainability, and any changes from the first year of implementation. In addition, data from Los Fresnos CISD's most recent progress report, and grant application were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Los Fresnos CISD Characteristics

A summary of Los Fresnos CISD's CDR program including schools, student grade-level, and number of students served, as well as details of the award, are provided in Table C9.

Table C9

Summary of Los Fresnos CISD's CDR Program

Community Type	Rural
Grades of Students Served	9-12
Number of Schools Served	1
Type of Schools Served	Public High School
Number of Students Served	Up to 200
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	8/1/2008
End Date	5/31/2010

Source: Grant Application

[49] The College, Career, & Technology Academy (CCTA) is located on a separate campus less than one mile away from Los Fresnos High School.

Schools

Los Fresnos CISD's high school is predominantly Hispanic (94%) with a large proportion of economically disadvantaged students (87%). While the high school has significantly more Hispanic students than the state average of 48%, they have a lower percentage of limited English proficient students (7% for Los Fresnos High School compared to 17% statewide). The high school also has a larger percentage of at-risk students (49%) than the district (45%) and the state (48%). See Table C10 for more information.

Table C10

Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2008–09)

Campus Name	*Race/ Ethnicity*			*Risk Factors*			
	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
Los Fresnos High School	0.4%	94.2%	5.2%	87.0%	7.4%	49.0%	16.2%
Los Fresnos CISD	0.4%	94.7%	4.5%	78.9%	25.2%	44.7%	17.0%
Texas	14.2%	47.9%	34%	56.7%	16.9%	48.3%	19.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Overview of Los Fresnos CISD CDR Program

According to the grant coordinator, the overall purpose of the Los Fresnos CISD CDR program is to meet the needs of the students by providing career and technological activities, and the purpose did not change from the first year of implementation. The program should help potential dropouts through an intervention that brings in community businesses and local colleges to help the students graduate and gain valuable academic and professional skills. The skills the students acquire at Los Fresnos CISD's College, Career, & Technology Academy (CCTA) will be useful as they enter the workforce or attend college.

Program Structure[50]

The basic structure of CDR at Los Fresnos CISD remained mostly the same during the second year of implementation. Los Fresnos CISD is implementing the CCTA for their CDR program. The CCTA program addresses academic support, family outreach, employment skills, and college readiness skills. CCTA provides programs of study for broad career concentrations in the areas of agriculture science and technology, arts and communication, business education, family and consumer science, health occupations technology, trade and industry, and technology education. The CCTA building is about one mile away from the high school and district offices and provides support to up to 200 students each year, ages 16-25, who currently attend or previously attended high school, but did not meet or are at

[50] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

high risk of not meeting graduation requirements. Participating students lack eight or fewer graduation credits and/or have not passed the Exit Level test (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, or TAKS).

The admissions process for CCTA includes a formal interview and mandatory orientation where students are informed of the course requirements, attendance requirements, student responsibilities, postsecondary expectations, and career opportunities available. Students, as well as their parents or guardians, must sign a contract agreeing to the requirements of the program prior to their acceptance into the program. All participating students have personal graduation plans (PGPs) that they meet through CCTA's four academic support components: credit attainment, credit retrieval, tutoring and mentoring, and technology-assisted labs. Students take the coursework in Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) remediation and work towards credit recovery. During the second year of implementation, Los Fresnos CISD discontinued the mandatory three-credit course, *College Success*, provided by the local technical college due to decreased student interest; however, dual credit options are still provided by the technical college. As a result of discontinuing *College Success*, Los Fresnos CISD and the local technical college planned a new *Career Pathways* program for the upcoming school year (2010-11) that is designed to prepare students for higher education programs or careers.

Participating students currently receive information on various career pathways and are still provided orientation for dual enrollment at the partnering local university and technical college. These program elements allow students to immediately transfer to college upon completion of high school graduation requirements. To encourage and motivate students, CCTA hosts motivational speakers from similar backgrounds as targeted students who, despite facing adversity and challenges, are successful adults. Transportation and social service support are also available to students to support them as they proceed through the program.

Another form of support for students that was expanded during the second year of implementation was mentoring. Four students from the local university are serving as peer mentors for the CCTA students. Each day, one of the mentors is on the CCTA campus providing support and showing students that college is a possibility that can be achieved. The grant coordinator indicated the college student mentors feel like they are giving back by mentoring the high school students and are very committed to the students they serve.

Two new components to CDR were added during the second year of implementation. One of the new components is the creation of the Saturday Academy. The Saturday Academy focuses on job skills rather than academics. Participating students could receive a certificate in the participating industry (such as welding, customer service, etc.) for each session the student attended. The second new component was the creation of "Opening Doors," a guest speaker program for parents/guardians of participating students. The guest speakers host classes for the parents/guardians on relevant topics and social service areas.

CDR Partners

Los Fresnos CISD's initiative is supported through over 10 CDR partnerships. Partnering agencies include local universities, local technical colleges, a counseling center, a bank, and other local businesses. CDR partners support career skills and provide employment opportunities for participating students. One of the local colleges provides professional development workshops for instructors and dual enrollment college preparation courses for students. The local technical college also provides dual enrollment courses. In addition, both institutions of higher education offer academic support and continuing education opportunities to CCTA students (such as financial aid training for students and parents/guardians and college entrance testing). The counseling center offers student and family support services. Together, CDR partnerships align job skills, student support, continuing education, and

dropout prevention in conjunction with recovery academics and research-based strategic curriculum and instruction. The grant coordinator stated that the relationship with the partners is very positive and understanding. Both of the community partners interviewed during the site visit reported that their relationship with the district is good. During the second year of implementation, Los Fresnos CISD also added "honorary partners" that provide job shadowing opportunities on an as-needed basis based on student interest.

CDR Program Implementation

According to the grant coordinator, implementation of CDR at Los Fresnos CISD during the first year of implementation made the staff of Los Fresnos CISD more aware of their student population. As a result, Los Fresnos CISD is starting the intervention at the Grade 9 level, which was a change from the first year of implementation. In addition, a Task Force was formed during the second year with 11 members including the superintendent. The purview of the Task Force includes knocking on the doors of students' homes looking for students who need CDR the most. There is also an enhanced student tracking system in place in the district. To track students, the school counselors are now checking in with students in CDR on a regular basis and, according to the grant coordinator, participating CCTA students indicated that they feel that they "belong" in school now.

For students to be accepted in CDR, they must be approved by the CCTA Advisory Committee. The CCTA Advisory Committee meets weekly. The committee reviews each student application, reviews the students' transcripts, and conducts a 15-minute interview with each student. Prior to accepting the student into the grant program, the committee looks at all of the other options offered at the high school campus available to students such as homework centers, Saturday academics tutorials, or flexible day schedules. The new principal at the high school reported that he wants to ensure that students in CDR cannot be served by the high school before being admitted to the CCTA. The principal stated that he does "not want to lose any student, but I want to make sure the options at the high school are utilized and CCTA is open for the most needy students."

Additionally, CDR supports tutoring for Grade 9 students at the CCTA and at the high school. Focus on the Grade 9 students increased during the second year of implementation in order to reach students at a younger age. The grant coordinator reported that the second year of implementation has focused more on intervention for these younger students. In addition, the county continues to offer the students a computer mobile unit that comes to the CCTA and shows how to create a resume and how to interview for a job.

Grant related activities are managed through the CCTA Team. The CCTA Team includes the Lead Educational Staff Member (LESM)/Coordinator for the grant (referred to as the grant coordinator in this report), the High School Project Team, the Coordinator of Career and Technology, the Coordinator for Guidance and Counseling, and the Coordinator for Parental Involvement. CCTA Team members keep weekly activity logs of the program activities for which they are directly responsible. The LESM/Coordinator also submits a weekly progress report to the Superintendent of Schools, who spearheaded the CCTA Planning Team for this project. Business community members are provided updates on the project's progress through monthly newsletters and personal on-site visits. In an effort to ensure open communication and coordination, the LESM/Coordinator holds weekly meetings with team members and coordinates monthly by on-site meetings with all team members.

Barriers to Program Implementation

District staff and partners were asked to cite barriers they faced throughout the implementation of CDR, and if applicable, what measures they had undertaken to address these. Key barriers included: (1) access

to students and (2) involvement of partners. Gaining access to students earlier to address the needs of these at-risk students was mentioned as a barrier by the counselors interviewed. The counselors understood that early intervention is critical to the success of any dropout prevention program. To address this barrier, CDR has an increased focus on students in Grade 9 by providing TAKS tutoring at the CCTA campus. Another barrier reported during the first site visit was the need to have partners on an "as needed" basis rather than a constant basis. To address this barrier, the grant coordinator identified "honorary" partners that provide job shadowing opportunities when needed based on student interest.

New barriers encountered during the second year of implementation included: (1) special needs students, (2) college registration requirements, and (3) a lack of knowledge of CDR. The first barrier is the issue of including special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) students at the CCTA. Currently, the CCTA campus does not have the capacity to serve students with special needs. Another new challenge described by the grant coordinator is registration at the local colleges for fall enrollment. The students in CDR who graduate in the summer have already missed the deadline for fall registration upon their graduation. CCTA staff and the local colleges are brainstorming ways to avoid the continuation of this issue. The new principal also indicated that a barrier to implementation is the lack of knowledge about CDR by the high school teachers. The high school teachers do not fully understand the purpose and goal of the CCTA or the criteria for student eligibility. To address this issue, the principal planned to highlight the program at an in-service teacher professional development session.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

For the most part, the facilitators for program implementation have not changed since the first year of implementation. CDR continues to bring the students another opportunity for graduation and is still believed to be a very good intervention model. Key facilitators include (1) small class size, and (2) assistance from college partners. The counselors and teacher agreed that the small class size at CCTA facilitates a close relationship between CDR staff and students. This relationship is important because the students feel safe to share their opinions during class or confide in their counselors when something happens in the students' personal lives. According to the grant coordinator, one new facilitator during the second year of implementation is college partners providing assistance to participating students with financial aid, registration, and tutoring. This has been helpful because it provides the participating students with the resources needed to apply to and attend college.

Relationship between CDR Staff and Students

The interviewees agreed that there is a strong relationship between the students and CDR program staff. The counselors often play a large role in the students' lives. The principal added that all CDR program staff members have the same goal in mind, which is getting students to graduate.

> ***"The relationship with the CCTA staff and students is very positive."***
>
> -Principal

Perceived Effects of CDR Program Activities

The grant coordinator, counselors, and teacher discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected these areas:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates
- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Academic Achievement

As indicated during the first site visit, the interviewees agreed that the personal attention provided by the CCTA to participating high school students pushes the students to work harder. The grant coordinator also believes that the students are in a better position to obtain a job after graduation because many of the business partners have shown an interest in the students for future employment. The teacher interviewed stated that students have had academic success because most of the participating students have passed the math portion of the TAKS. The teacher did not have specific information about the number or percentage of students who passed TAKS.

Attendance Improvement

In general, the interviewees indicated that the school district has continued to struggle with attendance during the second year of program implementation. The two counselors and teacher reported that attendance of CCTA students depends on the individual student's situation; many are caretakers or a parent, which makes it very difficult to come to school daily. The teacher elaborated that attendance is a difficult issue because 80% of the participating students have their own families. The grant coordinator reported that while attendance is still a challenge, the students now must call in to the CCTA when they are sick and the staff make home visits when students do not show up to class.

Improved Behavior

As reported during the first site visit, the grant coordinator, counselors, and teacher reported that there continues to be no discipline problems at CCTA. The grant coordinator reported that there have not been any in-school suspensions or suspensions since the inception of CCTA. The CCTA faculty members focus on positive moments and events and have not needed to punish the students. It was reported that teachers from the high school have been surprised by the positive changes they have seen in CCTA students when they return to their home high school campus, stating that the CCTA campus has a college atmosphere.

Dropout Rates

The grant coordinator believes the dropout rate should be lower since implementing CDR at Los Fresnos CISD, but did not have any official numbers to share with evaluators at the time of the site visit. However, one of the counselors indicated that the participating students try to stay in school but the students leave school because they need to fulfill their basic needs, such as work and helping their family.

Course Completion Rates

The grant coordinator reported that there has been a definite improvement in course completion as a result of receiving the grant. The counselors also agreed that more courses are being completed.

Improved Family Support/Relationships with Family

During the second year of implementation, the Los Fresnos CISD added the "Opening Doors" program that provides guest speakers for parents of participating students. In addition, the principal stated that students are helping parents by providing them with information about services offered by CCTA staff and partners.

> ***"There is an improvement [in dropout rates] because the taste of success motivates [the students]."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

College Readiness

The staff at CCTA take the students on field trips to college campuses and help the students fill out college applications and FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) forms. The counselors agreed that participating students are seriously considering college and, after attending field trips, the students are excited about the idea of attending college.

Technological Knowledge

The grant coordinator and teacher reported the participating students are learning valuable computer skills through using the A-Plus program (self-directed) and other computer programs available at the CCTA. Los Fresnos CISD used grant funds to purchase the A-Plus computer program for its students. There is also a Microsoft Office Programs class available to interested students. Once they complete the course they receive a certificate that can be attached to their résumé.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

Ethical workplace behaviors are modeled for the CCTA students by their many business partners. The students shadow various business professionals during a normal day at work and encounter the type of behavior that is appropriate in a workplace. Additionally, one of the counselors indicated that good behavior is expected of the students and that the students are "learning to respect each other."

> ***"It now seems like the light has turned on for students."***
>
> -Teacher

Effective Leadership Skills

> ***"One student went to a conference in Austin – she was well-mannered, well dressed, and acted professionally. She came back [to CCTA] a changed person."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Many of the students are developing leadership skills during their time at CCTA. The grant coordinator is confident that many students are becoming role models to other students in the program by modeling success. Additionally, one counselor reported that CDR provides opportunities for students to become leaders because of the small school setting. Participating students often felt lost at the large high school because the school is big and provides many distractions.

Oral and Written Communication Skills

Each of the interviewees agreed that students' communication skills have definitely improved at CCTA. One of the counselors stated that students' oral communication skills have improved because the participating students are advocating more for themselves after participating in CDR. However, the interviewed teacher indicated that since instruction is computer-based, there is a limited opportunity to gauge written communication skills.

Perceived Impact of CDR from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, principal, collaborating partners, counselors, and teacher were asked about the perceived impact of CDR from their individual perspective. The teacher and counselors agreed that even when the participating students have to retake the TAKS test numerous times, they do not quit. One counselor and the principal added that when some of the students return to their home high school campus, they seem more confident and they participate in school activities. CCTA students get to see that there is life beyond their town by going on field trips to college campuses. As one counselor stated during the first site visit, "Many of the students are Generation One[51] and don't have parents that can share this experience with them."

Students. Participating students are very receptive to CDR. The grant coordinator, teacher, and counselor agreed that students are building self-esteem and realizing that they can succeed in school. The counselor indicated that students are grateful for earning accelerated credits and are making a smooth transition back to the high school once credits are recovered. The teacher reported that when students arrive at the CCTA they have the attitude that they cannot succeed, but after participating in the CCTA the students' attitudes changed for the better.

Parents. Interviewees reported that parents are thankful for this program and they want to learn more about CDR. The grant coordinator also reiterated that families come in and thank the staff for helping their children and sparking their interest in new careers. One parent wrote a letter explaining that their child did not feel like he "fit in" at the high school, but after attending the CCTA, the parent believes there was a positive change in the child's attitude. The teacher added that parents are supportive of the CCTA and are appreciative of the communication between the CCTA staff and the parents.

Teachers. One counselor stated that the high school teachers know they have another avenue for their students who are at risk of dropping out. However, the CCTA teacher and new principal indicated that

[51] Generation One refers to students whose parents immigrated to the United States. The student is the first generation to be born in the United States.

the high school teachers do not know very much about the CCTA and need to be educated about the program and criteria for student admittance.

Principal. The new high school principal clearly understands the benefits of this program and values its presence in the district. The principal serves on the CCTA Advisory Committee that determines student admission to the program. The counselors agreed that the principal works very closely with the program and is committed to continuing its success.

Sustainability and Enhancement

Sustainability of CDR is still a priority for Los Fresnos CISD. The principal emphasized the importance of the district paying for teacher salaries to sustain CDR. In addition to staffing, the district will need to expand the program by adding special education teachers at the CCTA, buying more computers, and securing more resources for teacher salaries. CDR partners interviewed indicated that the partnerships will be sustained after the grant period because of the need within the community for this program. Both interviewed partners plan on continuing their collaboration during the next school year. This commitment from the district and collaborating partners is a good indication that this program will be sustained after the end of the grant period.

Conclusion

Overall, following the second year of program implementation, the interviewees continued to believe that CDR is successfully helping students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Students who attend the CCTA are placed in small classes that engage them in learning and provide them the opportunity to actively participate in every lesson. CCTA students can also be dually enrolled at a local college and have the advantage of going to the college campus to get a feel for the college experience. The students are being exposed to new career opportunities by being on campus and learning from guest speakers. The CCTA students are also exposed to new computer software that allows them to increase their technological knowledge and prepare them for college or the workforce. New additions to CDR during the second year of implementation include a Saturday Academy, "Opening Doors" program for parents, and the *Career Pathways* program by the local technical college.

From the first year of implementation into the second year, interviewees continued to believe that participating students have been positively impacted in the following areas: academic achievement, improved behavior, dropout rates, course completion rates, college readiness, relationships with family, technological knowledge, ethical workplace behaviors, effective leadership skills, and oral communication skills. Interviewees reported that the CCTA students are continuing to improve academically while also decreasing the amount of inappropriate behavior that would lead to suspension. At the time of the second site visit, there had been no serious behavioral violations. The parents of the participating students seem very thankful that their child had the opportunity to participate in this program and are encouraged by what their child is learning at CCTA. The high school staff members are also pleased with having CDR as it is another tool they can utilize to help struggling students; however, during the second year of implementation it became clear that the high school teachers need more information about CDR and the criteria for student admittance. Sustaining CDR after the grant period continues to be very important to the district and the interviewees. Funding for the CCTA can be provided by the district and through other available funding sources. This program continues to be highly valued by the participants and is likely to be continued.

> ***"The district wants [CDR], as well as the community."***
>
> -Grant Coordinator

Case Study Report: Pasadena Independent School District (Suburban)

In May 2010, evaluators conducted a two-day site visit in Pasadena Independent School District (ISD), a suburban district in eastern Texas. As a Cycle 2 grantee, this was the first site visit to document the district's five high schools' participation in CDR. The site visit team conducted individual interviews with the grant coordinator; the Career and Technical Education Director; assistant principals; counselors; a teacher; and three community partners. A case study protocol included questions that would help researchers gather information about CDR program processes and outcomes, including program implementation, collaboration, outcomes, and sustainability. In addition, Pasadena ISD's grant application and most recent progress report were used to supplement information from the site visit.

Pasadena ISD Characteristics

A summary of Pasadena ISD's CDR program including schools, student grade-level, and number of students served, as well as details of the award are provided in Table C11.

Table C11

Summary of Pasadena ISD's CDR Program

Community Type	Suburban
Grades of Students Served	9-10
Number of Schools Served	5
Type of Schools Served	5 High Schools
Number of Students Served	200
Grant Amount	$250,000
Start Date	4/1/2009
End Date	2/28/2011

Source: Grant Application

Schools

All five high schools in Pasadena ISD are predominantly Hispanic. While the student bodies at these high schools are composed of a larger percentage of Hispanics (ranging from 51% to 93%) than the state average for all students (48%), Limited English Proficient (LEP) students at Pasadena ISD's five high schools comprise a comparatively smaller percentage (ranging from 5% to 14%) than the state average (17%) for all students. Three of the high schools (Pasadena High School, Sam Rayburn High School, and South Houston High School) have a higher proportion of economically disadvantaged students (ranging from11% to 14%) than both the district average for all its students (29%) and state average for all students (17%), and are also characterized by higher rates of mobility. At-risk students comprise larger percentages at four

of Pasadena ISD's high schools (ranging from 55% to 71%) when compared to that of the Texas state average for all students (48%).

Table C12

Student Demographics and Risk Factors for Targeted Schools (2008–09)

Campus Name	*Race/ Ethnicity*			*Risk Factors*			
	African-American	Hispanic	White	Economically Disadvantaged	Limited English Proficient	At Risk	Mobility
J. Frank Dobie High School	18.6%	51.1%	19.1%	47.8%	5.1%	61.9%	15.1%
Pasadena High School	1.3%	92.6%	5.7%	78.9%	13.5%	71.4%	20.6%
Pasadena Memorial High School	3.6%	60.3%	31.7%	48.1%	6.5%	47.1%	16.8%
Sam Rayburn High School	2.4%	82.8%	14.4%	75.9%	11.3%	55.3%	23.0%
South Houston High School	10.7%	82.5%	5.7%	78.6%	11.5%	56.0%	23.1%
Pasadena ISD	7.5%	77.3%	11.8%	74.9%	28.8%	56.7%	20.2%
Texas	14.2%	47.9%	34.0%	56.7%	16.9%	48.3%	19.8%

Source: Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2008–09

Overview of Pasadena ISD CDR Program

To address district-wide high dropout rates and low completion rates, Pasadena ISD's goal for CDR is to establish a sustainable infrastructure for identifying, monitoring, and supporting its at-risk students in pursuit of their high school diplomas and postsecondary educational and vocational prospects. Student support is provided not only through strong interpersonal relationships with district personnel and a range of services, but also through interventions produced by collaborative efforts between Pasadena ISD and its community partners. Guiding cohorts of Grade 9 students from course selection to internship placement to degree completion in their senior year, the program focuses on the relationship between coursework and postsecondary opportunities.

Program Structure[52]

As part of its implementation of CDR, Pasadena ISD has developed a series of initiatives and partnerships with local businesses, organizations, and colleges in the following areas: workforce skills development, academic support, attendance improvement, and student family support.

Based on five dropout risk factors, Pasadena ISD staff developed lists of Grade 9 and 10 students from each campus who were eligible for participation in CDR. The risk factors utilized were: failure to attend school; academic failure and retention (particularly in Grade 9); a high number of disciplinary referrals; lack of involvement in school or co-curricular or extracurricular activities; and placement into Grade 9 despite failure to meet Grade 8 promotion criteria. Each campus list comprised twenty students per grade, totaling forty students per campus (200 across the district), who were then informed, along with their parents, of their selection.

Cognizant of the stigma and resistance attached to the term "dropout," the district referred to CRCDR exclusively as the "High School Success Program" (HSSP). The Career and Technical Education (CTE) director noted that the dropout dimension of the program was only mentioned in passing, and that neither participants nor their parents saw participants as potential dropouts. Rather, as one assistant principal noted, HSSP placed an emphasis on delineating postsecondary goals, designing a path to attain them, and succeeding in high school in the process. To encourage parents to give permission for their children to participate (and to encourage students to participate), district staff "made it like an honor" to be selected for the program by hosting students and their families for a dinner. Once parental permission was granted, students were enrolled in CDR.

Given the differing needs, interests, and resources available to students at each school, grant activities varied for each school's participants. A few of the core programming items deemed "non-negotiable" were the assessment of students' career interests through the *Kuder Career Planning System*; individual meetings between students and counselors to review and determine the alignment of *Kuder* results with students' goals; and designing Personal Graduation Plans (PGP) to fulfill these aspirations. Additionally, all campuses had the opportunity to participate in workforce development workshops held at the district's Career and Technical Center and a college campus tour. Regardless of which activities a school chose to provide for its students, it had to adhere to strict budgetary guidelines.

To ensure the sustainability of the infrastructure facilitated by the grant as well as the successful coordination of programming across all five campuses, the district employed a part-time grant coordinator to oversee all five campuses and maintain relationships with each campus coordinator. The grant coordinator created folders for student participants, each of which included sheets for tracking discipline, attendance, and grades, and distributed these to each campus. Assistant principals served as campus coordinators for the grant due to their familiarity with students' disciplinary, attendance, and grade records, as well as their work with counselors on monitoring students' progress.

CDR Partners

Pasadena ISD's initiative is supported through five partnerships, which include a local college, non-profit organizations, and community businesses. CDR partners provide support ranging from the provision of scholarship funds to services such as employment trainings and campus tours. The district identified its community partners on the basis of pre-existing relationships it could build upon to provide support for

[52] This section borrows liberally from the grant application; however, the information has been reorganized from its original format.

students from their freshman through senior year, not only in terms of employment opportunities, but college opportunities as well.

The local college and a community business worked with the district to design two capstone events for students: a half-day campus tour and a career exploration series. During the campus tour, students saw the college's facilities and available resources, and interfaced with college faculty. The career exploration series comprised three workshops to guide students through the life cycle of a job search and culminated in a few successful placements for students. The CTE director expressed appreciation for the community business, emphasizing that they "did a phenomenal job working with the kids and working with [the district]. [It was] unbelievably successful."

According to the CTE director, the number and nature of relationships with community partners would change in coming years to reflect the interests and needs of students. At the time of the site visit, the district had not yet actively engaged all of its community partners due to the fact that many students were not yet of employment age.

CDR Program Implementation

While students at each campus received services through CDR, the nature and types of activities available to each school's students varied based on resources and campus coordinators. Students at all five high schools participated in the *Kuder* assessment, met individually with counselors to create their PGPs, and were able to attend both the college campus visit and workshop sessions at the Career and Technical Center.

Although not all CDR programming and services were predicated upon the *Kuder* assessment's results for each student, the *Kuder* played a central role in guiding both students and counselors toward an understanding of students' aspirations. Once the assessment was completed, all students met individually with their campus counselors to identify what coursework needed to be completed, and what coursework would best service their postsecondary goals, resulting in the development of their PGPs.

Aiming to show students what options were available to them locally for postsecondary education, district CDR staff worked with the local college to organize a half-day visit. The first half of the visit comprised a tour of the campus and its facilities, and then students were given the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of college faculty. During this second portion with the faculty, students were separated into groups based upon their *Kuder*-identified interests, in order to ensure relevance and to highlight the possibilities that awaited them upon graduation from high school.

> ***"I think what they were really trying to do with this grant is to build a child's self-esteem and let them think they can, because these are the kids for years who have been told they can't."***
>
> - CTE Director

For vocational insight and workforce development, the district collaborated with a community business to design and host three career exploration workshops. The workshops guided students through the process of aligning the lifestyles they envisioned for themselves and the careers they sought to pursue; taught them how to write resumes, interview, and apply for jobs; and encouraged them to interface with different potential employers for job opportunities during the last session, which was set up like a mini career fair. During these workshops, presenters emphasized the importance of completing one's education and always presenting oneself appropriately through manners and style of dress, a lesson which interviewed staff noted that students learned well. Students were divided by age for all sessions, thereby ensuring

the relevance of information and activities. For students not of employment age, activities included creating business cards for careers they hoped to have someday.

Variations in program offerings at each school included home visits, access to PLATO, a credit recovery program, Saturday Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) tutorials, and in one case, additions to an existing mentoring program. Home visits for student family support represented a collaborative effort between campuses, with one campus coordinator reporting that while her school had first proposed and conducted visits to students' homes, another school developed a letter for distribution to parents who were absent when visits were made. Home visits usually took place on Saturdays, and the "home visit teams" generally comprised the campus coordinator and a few teachers and counselors who were compensated for their extra time through grant funds. Some of the teachers provided translations for parents not fluent in English. Home visits were meant to draw parents' attention to their students' performance and highlight the community of support and resources available to them and their children enrolled in school. In the realm of direct academic support, some schools opted to use the Plato program more actively than others to help students either with credit recovery or TAKS remediation.

While the grant coordinator was responsible for general oversight of programs and made monthly visits to each campus to ensure that student folders remained up-to-date and to address any logistical or programmatic concerns, campus coordinators also held monthly meetings on their own campuses with staff associated with the program. Additionally, campus coordinators met with the grant coordinator monthly to discuss best practices being implemented at each of the campuses.

Barriers to Program Implementation

District staff and partners were asked to cite barriers they faced throughout the implementation of CDR, and if applicable, what measures they had undertaken to address these. Key barriers included: (1) scheduling and time limitations, (2) the name of the grant, (3) funding restrictions, and (4) parent or family engagement. Two assistant principals, a counselor, and the CTE director, indicated that there was a general shortage of time that made it difficult to ensure the district was engaging in all necessary grant activities. However, one community partner identified TAKS preparation as the main cause of limitations on the schools' scheduling options for more CDR activities. The CTE director also noted that the name of the grant itself was a substantial deterrent due to the negative implications of the term "dropout." The CTE director wished the name of the program would be changed at the state level even though Pasadena ISD had addressed the issue by referring to CDR as HSSP district-wide. Two assistant principals and a counselor felt that regulations surrounding the use of grant funds were too stringent, and expressed a desire to use funds to incentivize success (this barrier was the result of miscommunication between TEA and Pasadena ISD as incentives were an allowable expense). The assistant principals' proposed incentives included wristbands and t-shirts emblazoned with "HSSP" and university t-shirts to remind students of their goals. Minimal parent or family engagement was underscored by the CTE director as another difficulty in implementation, as district staff often found it hard to obtain parental permission for initial student enrollment in CDR and for activities like the college visit and the career workshops.

Facilitators of Program Implementation

While the district identified components that successfully guided program implementation in their progress report, interviews with district staff members and community partners provided additional insight into the role of these facilitators. Key facilitators cited by both district staff and one community partner were: (1) coordination and (2) communication. For the CTE director, the grant coordinator role was the most critical factor in the program's success due to the maintenance of regular communication between campuses and ensuring that schools kept their records up to date for the grant. The community partner remarked that without the coordination on the district's end (overseen by both the CTE director and the grant coordinator), it would have been incredibly difficult to set up the workshops successfully. Another facet of communication cited by one counselor was the alerts that counselors and assistant principals received when students were absent or when their grades fell below a certain point, thereby enabling the counselor to immediately intervene and speak with students. District staff repeatedly emphasized the importance of the interpersonal relationships that developed with students as a result of regular communication. Lastly, the CTE director indicated that what made CDR successful was the students' perception of the program as a club that they now belonged to, having never participated in extracurricular activities before.

> ***"But building those relationships, it's shown me that spending just a little bit of time with those kids, it's amazing to see how much that they're willing to do and go forth."***
>
> - Assistant Principal

Relationship between CDR Staff and Students

Throughout the site visit, all the district staff interviewed underscored the importance of the positive and strong relationships between themselves and their students that lay at the crux of the program's successes. These relationships were fostered through home visits and staff follow-ups on student absences and grades, and according to the teacher, students "appreciated the extra push they received from the personnel." One assistant principal attributed the growth of staff-student relationships to students' need for "someone to help them solve their problems," a need that this assistant principal believed had since opened up communication and led to regular communication between staff and students. One counselor reported that students would now even voluntarily visit her office to check their grades.

Perceived Effects of CDR Activities

The grant coordinator, counselors, and teachers discussed their perceptions of the effects of program activities on students during their interviews. They were asked to address the ways, if any, that CDR affected the areas listed below:

- Academic achievement
- Attendance improvement
- Improved behavior
- Dropout rates
- Course completion rates

- College readiness
- Improved family support/relationships with family
- Technological knowledge
- Ethical workplace behaviors
- Effective leadership skills
- Oral and written communication skills

Each of these outcomes is discussed below.

Academic Achievement

The grant coordinator indicated that with the exception of 5% of the participating students, all CDR students had experienced some kind of academic growth due to CDR and the presence of school staff members who held them accountable for their academic performance. The CTE director and the counselors interviewed agreed that overall there had been an improvement in grades in comparison to before the program, with one counselor adding that there had been improvement in TAKS scores. One assistant principal received feedback from a teacher that a few students, upon attending the workshops, decided that they wanted to enroll in summer school to earn credits lost due to attendance or grade issues. One counselor attributed the improvement in grades to the future and career-oriented aspect of CDR, particularly the visit to the local college, stating that, "focusing on those careers really helped to improve [the students'] grades."

Attendance Improvement

The grant coordinator, CTE director, and all three counselors agreed that, overall, attendance rates improved for CDR students since the program began. One counselor provided the anecdote of a student whose attendance had been poor, but improved after the campus tour of the local college, and asked when the next visit to the college would be. Additionally, the counselor noted that many student absences were due to previously discussed work obligations and the students kept up with their schoolwork to pass their classes.

Improved Behavior

The CTE director and all three interviewed counselors felt students' behavior had improved, although the CTE director cautioned that improvements in behavior had not been "wholesale." One counselor's perceptions were based on feedback from some teachers regarding classroom behavior and added, "I feel like this is a challenging group of kids, and this year, we've seen a lot of positive change. I've seen them grow up a lot." The counselor attributed this improvement to the relationships that had developed between students and the counselor, as well as with other school faculty. Another counselor affirmed the importance of the relationships, noting that behavioral improvements were tied to "motivation and believing in [students]."

Dropout Rates

According to the grant coordinator and the CTE director, few students had dropped out of school since CDR began; and those students who were no longer attending school had generally moved or transferred to another school. One counselor noted that only two students had left the initial group at that school, where one student moved back to Mexico and the other student simply did not return to the program, even after parent-teacher discussions.

Course Completion Rates

While the grant coordinator stated that the district would know more about course completion by the end of the school year, it was noted that a few students had been able to move up a grade after having fallen behind, thereby indicating successful completion of their previous courses. One counselor stated that course completion had increased, attributing this finding to student grades.

> ***"Parents aren't strangers to us, they're in partnership with us in helping their children."***
>
> - Assistant Principal

Improved Family Support/ Relationships with Family

The CTE director noted that family support had likely improved over the course of CDR due to home visits conducted by some of the campuses, but said that family support was "always a problem" in the district. Anecdotes from two assistant principals supported the CTE director's perception of improved familial relationships. One assistant principal shared that, along with other faculty from their campus, the assistant principal had been able to mediate successfully a disagreement between a student and the student's parents over the student's desire to work and go to school. The assistant principal reassured the parents that faculty would work with the student to maintain grades as necessary to keep the job. The assistant principal also shared that another father had expressed gratitude to the staff for steering his child away from students who would have had a negative influence on his child. These anecdotes underscored another assistant principal's observation that teachers had developed relationships with parents over the course of the program.

College Readiness

Although most responses from interviewed district staff highlighted observations of increased college awareness among students following participation on the college campus tour, the grant coordinator felt that the college tour helped students become college ready as well. The grant coordinator elaborated, noting that students came to the realization that college was within their reach, whereas they had been intimidated and fearful to try it prior to the program. One counselor pointed out that the programming that was coordinated for CDR was often in concert with other programs available to the rest of the campus and was specifically geared toward higher education preparation, therefore improving college readiness.

Technological Knowledge

Examples of improvements in technological knowledge provided by the grant coordinator and the CTE director primarily stemmed from students' use of computers for the credit recovery program, Plato, and from job searches during the career exploration workshops. Other interviewed district staff indicated they were unable to gauge whether any additional technological knowledge had been gained throughout the course of the grant.

Ethical Workplace Behaviors

District staff (with the exception of one counselor) and one community partner were impressed by students' adoption of lessons learned during the career exploration workshops, specifically in regard to appropriate styles of dress at the office. Throughout many of the interviews, the styles of work-appropriate dress students adopted for the final workshop were the most commonly cited success of the program in regard to ethical workplace behaviors. One counselor remarked that he felt a few of his students had ethical workplace behaviors as they often had to leave class early in order to ensure a timely arrival at their jobs.

Effective Leadership Skills

While the grant coordinator and the counselors noted that since students' induction into CDR, students now express themselves and are more outspoken than before, only one counselor spoke to specific instances of demonstrated leadership. This counselor highlighted the fact that some of her female CDR students had not only recently joined other organizations advised by the counselor, but two had recently become officers in those clubs. One of the other counselors, however, indicated a wish for students to have more opportunities from the grant to obtain leadership skills.

> ***"The [High School Success Program] makes [students] a part of something when they never would've been part of something."***
>
> - Assistant Principal

Oral and Written Communication Skills

The CTE director and two of three counselors agreed the oral and written skills of the students have become stronger. The director based this on observations that students spoke with their counselors and teachers "on a different level," while one counselor noted that students had provided strong responses to open-ended questions on their job applications during the career exploration workshops.

Perceived Impact of CDR from Different Perspectives

During the site visit, the grant coordinator, CTE director, assistant principals, community partners, counselors, and teacher were asked about the perceived impact of CDR from their individual perspective. Drawing on observations made during the resume editing portion of the career workshop, the grant coordinator noted that many students now felt that they were "a part of something" because of CDR. One counselor noted that students were "really talking about the future," and had observed a change in attitudes and more active engagement in school.

Students. All the district staff interviewed agreed that CDR has been a positive experience for students through its ability to foster a sense of belonging. The three assistant principals, teacher, and three counselors corroborated this observation with anecdotes of student feedback. One counselor was asked by students whether they would be part of the CDR group next year, while an assistant principal noted that students expressed their appreciation for the program and the school's positive communications with their families that highlighted students' progress towards their vocational aspirations. The assistant principal continued, stating that students "feel good about knowing they belong to something that stands for excellence, for graduation." Another assistant principal indicated that the program had "really sparked an interest" in students, and by the end of the career workshops, faculty had difficulty convincing two students to leave because they were so deeply engaged in conversation with workshop facilitators.

Parents. Two assistant principals, two counselors, and the teachers reported that parents were appreciative of CDR and the attention given to students based on feedback primarily from home visits. One teacher shared that the home visits were important for cultivating relationships between parents and the school, as parents were happy to see the effort the staff made to convince children to return to school. One counselor was told by a parent, "[m]y son did not have much interest in school. He was there, but I didn't see much enthusiasm, and now he's looking forward to going [to school]." Another counselor who had worked with CDR students' parents in previous years noted that parents were appreciative of the assistance provided to their students.

Teachers. Two counselors and one assistant principal stated that teachers felt CDR was a worthwhile endeavor, with one counselor stating that teachers also felt the program helped with relationships, grades, and attendance. The assistant principal noted that teachers at her campus were excited to hear and see how their students from previous years had done at the workshops, and wanted to see photos. Additionally, the assistant principal noted that some teachers had even worked together to help a student purchase appropriate clothing in preparation for the career workshops held at the Career and Technical Center.

> ***"[CDR is] something that will live on campuses based on the fact that it's good practice."***
>
> - CTE Director

Principals. Both teachers and counselors affirmed that their schools' principals (and assistant principals) were supportive of CDR. As one counselor said, "the principal always considers the staffs' concerns and is 100% supportive."

Sustainability and Enhancement

In the design and implementation of the district's programming for CDR grant, district staff sought to establish a solid framework and protocol for addressing the needs of at-risk students in future years, past the grant's life cycle. The infrastructure established by the grant coordinator centered around the early identification of students, administration of the *Kuder* assessment, maintenance of attendance and grade records, and credit recovery. The grant coordinator expressed her hope that "this infrastructure will stay with the campus coordinator" for all schools throughout the district, a sentiment that was echoed by the CTE director who believed that they had "put a system in place that campuses can follow." The district indicated that once it had completed its first year of implementation, it would evaluate its own programming to determine successes and shortcomings to be addressed in the future.

Beyond the scope of campus-specific infrastructure, partnerships with other community organizations, businesses, and colleges will continue to grow in coming years with more students reaching employment and college age. The community business that facilitated the career workshops noted that it hoped to work more with the district in the future and would organize another set of workshops for future groups of students. Continued relationships with the local college that developed a campus tour stemmed from the fact that the college wished to attract more students to its campus and the district's hopes for continued education on the part of students who had faced difficulty.

In regards to financial concerns, the district indicated that it would work to acquire any additional funds that Plato credit recovery and transportation would require. These funds would come from both the district and extra funds from the principal of each school. District staff's confidence in and hopes for the sustainability of CDR centered on the belief that the grant coordinator had "set up a system that will be easy to manage once she's gone. Relationships built will allow us to do that, with no money," as the CTE director said.

Conclusion

Overall, the interviewees believe that CDR is successfully helping students who are at risk of dropping out of school. It does so by working with students to identify and articulate their postsecondary goals, whether educational or vocational, through the employment of the *Kuder* assessment and meetings with counselors. Furthermore, students are provided the opportunity to tour a local college campus and attend a series of workshops meant to hone their career search skills, thereby nurturing a sense of belonging to CDR and fostering greater engagement with their education. A variety of other options are offered to them depending on the school they attend.

Interviewed district staff indicated that most CDR students have increased their academic achievement, attendance, workforce readiness, and in some cases relationships with their families. While students had previously been disengaged from their education, relationships built between district staff and students led students to view themselves as a part of something and lend a more positive take on their futures. Relationships between the district and community are equally important. These relationships, combined with the present program infrastructure and both district and campus funds, will sustain activities past the funding period.

Appendix D: Propensity Score Matching Details

Propensity Score Matching

One of the centerpieces of the evaluation was a quasi-experimental study between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR schools and non-CDR schools. The development of a comparison group allowed us to estimate what would have happened in the absence of CDR. Comparison schools were chosen using propensity score matching.

In our school-level matching procedure, 11 of the 15 Cycle 1 and 26 Cycle 2 CDR schools were matched. Specifically, two Cycle 1 schools from Port Arthur were excluded from the matching procedure because they did not implement CDR as expected (due in part to Hurricane Ike). Two Cycle 1 CDR schools were not matched: Reach Charter (Houston ISD) and Rick Hawkins High School (School of Excellence in Education). Reach Charter was excluded from the matching because it had no 2007–08 campus achievement data and there was no match for Rick Hawkins on all these matching variables. Finally, the five Cycle 2 campuses that did not serve students were excluded from the matching procedure because they did not implement the program: Hac DAEP High School (Harlandale ISD), Instr/Guide Center, Southwest Key Program, Achieve Early Education (McAllen ISD), and The Summit High School (Pasadena).

Schools were matched on the following school-level variables:

- Percentage of students at the school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch
- Racial/ethnic composition of the student body
- Percentage of special education students in the school
- Percentage of English language learners (ELL) students in the school
- Percentage of at-risk students.
- Instructional program (Regular, Alternative, DAEP)
- Charter status (charter, not a charter school)
- Urbanicity (rural, suburban, urban) – this variable was created by grouping the various 'community type' categories as those are classified by TEA into the following four overarching categories: (a) Suburban [Major Metropolitan Suburban; Other Central City Suburban]; (b) Urban [Major Urban]; and (c) Rural [Independent Town, Other Central City, Non-Metropolitan, and Rural]; (d) Charter [TEA's 'community type' category with no geographic information]
- School enrollment – this variable was transformed from a continuous variable to a categorical variable with five categories; based on school size, schools were categorized as: (1) very small schools [fewer than 300 students], (2) small schools [300-599 students], (3) medium sized schools [600-899 students], 4) large schools [900-1,999 students], and 5) very large schools [2,000 or more students].

Finally, the matching procedure required that schools have complete 2007–08 campus achievement data in TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math as well as being located in a CDR grantee district.

The matching of Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 CDR and comparison schools were conducted using a precise algorithm applied through a computer-based macro, called "MatchIt", written by Ho, Imai, King, and Stuart (2004, 2007), following the work of Rosenbaum and Rubin (1983). The default nearest neighbor matching method in MatchIt was "greedy" matching, where the closest control match for each treated unit was chosen one at a

time. Specifically, a 1-to-1 nearest neighbor match on a logistic-regression based propensity score within caliper restrictions was followed. The procedure chose one control case (in this situation, a non-participating CDR school) that was closest to the treated case on a 'distance' measure without replacement (by default, it is the logit). The number of standard deviations of the distance measure within which to draw control cases was set to 0.25.

Tables D1 and D2 summarize the characteristics of the resulted matched schools on all proposed matching variables.

Variables that are italicized were subject to exact matching. The balance results indicated that in the resulting matches, there were no systematic or significant (mean) differences between the matched pairs of schools on the majority of the key matching variables, with the exception of the free-reduced price lunch variable for the Cycle 1 matched schools and the special education variable for the Cycle 2 matched schools.

Table D1:

Summary of Balance Statistics for Cycle 1 Matched Schools

Matching Variables	Cycle 1 CDR Schools Average (Std. Deviation)	Non-CDR Schools Average (Std. Deviation)	Std. Mean Difference
Economically Disadvantaged	90% (8.9)	84% (7.3)	0.656
At-Risk	72.2% (10.9)	72.7% (10)	0.052
African American	13.5% (26)	14.2 (26)	0.030
Hispanic	84% (25.4)	83 (26)	0.021
Enrolled in Special Education	15% (3.5)	14.3 (3.7%)	0.251
Limited English Proficiency	17.4% (9.9)	16.8 % (11.7)	0.057
Rural	45.5%	45.5%	0.000
Suburban	27.2%	27.2%	0.000
Urban	27.3%	27.3%	0.000
Regular	100%	100%	0.000
Non-Charter	100%	100%	0.000
Very Small	-	-	-
Small	-	-	-
Medium	9.1%	9.1%	0.000
Large	36.4%	36.4%	0.000
Very Large	54.5%	54.5%	0.000

Table D2:

Summary of Balance Statistics for Cycle 2 Matched Schools

Matching Variables	Cycle 2 CDR Schools Average (Std. Deviation)	Non-CDR Schools Average (Std. Deviation)	Std. Mean Difference
Economically Disadvantaged	66.5% (16.3)	69.7% (18.5)	0.197
At Risk	67.6% (15.8)	69.2% (15.1)	0.102
African American	16.7% (24.5)	19.0% (23.5)	0.094
Hispanic	68.8% (25.4)	68.3 (24.1)	0.022
Enrolled in Special Education	11.1% (3.9)	12.5 (5.4%)	0.355
Limited English Proficiency	10.5% (7.3)	11.5 % (11.4)	0.143
Rural	30.8%	30.8%	0.000
Suburban	46.1%	46.1%	0.000
Urban	19.2%	19.2%	0.000
Charter	3.9%	3.9%	0.000
Non-Charter	96.1%	96.1%	0.000
Regular Instruction	88.5%	88.5%	0.000
Alternative Instruction	11.5%	11.5%	0.000
Very Small	7.7%	7.7%	0.000
Small	7.7%	7.7%	0.000
Medium	15.4%	15.4%	0.000
Large	65.4%	65.4%	0.000
Very Large	3.8%	3.8%	0.000

Appendix E: CDR Services Provided

Table E1.

Specific Strategies Used by Cycle 1 CDR Grantees, by Provider (D=Direct, B=Brokered to Outside Agency)

	School of Excellence in Education	Port Arthur ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Houston ISD	Edgewood ISD	Brownsville ISD
ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES						
Tutoring	D	D, B	D	D		D
Dual credit courses	B		B		B	B
Reading/literacy program	D					
Funding for textbooks	D	D				D
Individual graduation/ education plans	D		D		D	D
Incentives to students			B	D		
Peer-to-peer tutoring		D	D	D		
Professional development for teachers	B	D	B		D	D
Academic advisors	D					
Mentoring (by Teachers)	D	D				
Educational referrals	B				B	
Academic acceleration (credit acceleration)			D			
Credit recovery	D	D	D			B
WORKFORCE SKILL DEVELOPMENT						
Paid employment	B		D	D	D	B
Job shadowing	B		B		D	B
Job internship	B		D		B	
Job placement	B		B			B
Job preparation workshops		B	B		D	
Career paths		B	D		B	B
Vocational education		B	D	D		B
Vocational assessments/ career counseling		B	B			D, B
CO-OP classes						D
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES						
Mentoring (by peers)		D		D		(CONTINUED)

Table E1. (continued)

Specific Strategies Used by Cycle 1 CDR Grantees, by Provider (D=Direct, B=Brokered to Outside Agency)

	School of Excellence in Education	Port Arthur ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Houston ISD	Edgewood ISD	Brownsville ISD
Mentoring (by adult non-school staff)				B		B
Dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals	D			D	B	
At-Risk Counselors			D			D
Transportation	D	D	B		D	
Child care			B		D	
Attempts to improve school climate			D	D		
PARENT/FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES						
Parenting education	B	D	B	D	D	B
Home visits	D	B				B
Family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports)	B		B	D	D	D
LIFE SKILLS/BEHAVIOR						
Financial literacy	B					
Character education		B	B	D	D	
Community service			B			
Motivational speakers			D	B		B
Juvenile Justice coordination		B				B
Pregnancy services (prenatal care; offsite instruction)						B
Means for improving attendance/truancy (e.g., attendance contracts)		B	D			D
PR Campaign to increase community awareness			D			
Behavior management (e.g., anger; discipline matters)		B			B	

Table E1. (continued)

Specific Strategies Used by Cycle 1 CDR Grantees, by Provider (D=Direct, B=Brokered to Outside Agency)

	School of Excellence in Education	Port Arthur ISD	Los Fresnos CISD	Houston ISD	Edgewood ISD	Brownsville ISD
COLLEGE PREPARATION/ APPLICATION ASSISTANCE						
Financial aid			B			D
College Fairs, centers for college prep	D				D	B
Post secondary education assistance		B	D		B	D

* Service categories differ slightly from the core service categories established under CDR grant program. The additional service categories were identified to allow the evaluation team a more granular look at service data.

Cycle 1 Grantees

Table E2

Services Provided By Cycle 1 Grantees

Brownsville ISD	At-risk counselors, career paths, college fairs / centers for college prep, co-op classes, credit recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, funding for textbooks, home visits, individual graduation / education plans, job placement, job shadowing, juvenile justice coordination, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by adult non-school staff), motivational speakers, paid employment, parenting education, post-secondary education assistance, pregnancy services (prenatal care, off-site instruction), professional development for teachers, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling (career mentors, career placement officer), vocational education, work
Edgewood ISD	Behavior management (e.g., anger, discipline matters), career paths, character education, child care, college fairs / centers for college prep, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dual credit courses, educational referrals, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, parenting education, post-secondary education assistance, professional development for teachers, transportation, work
Houston ISD	Attempts to improve school climate, character education, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), incentives to students, mentoring (by adult non-school staff, peers), motivational speakers, paid employment, parenting education, peer-to-peer tutoring, tutoring, vocational education
Los Fresnos CISD	Academic acceleration (credit acceleration), at-risk counselors, attempts to improve school climate, career paths, character education, child care, community service, credit recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job placement, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), motivational speakers, paid employment, parenting education, peer-to-peer tutoring, post-secondary education assistance, PR campaign to increase community awareness, professional development for teachers, transportation, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
Port Arthur ISD	Behavior management (e.g., anger, discipline matters), career paths, character education, credit recovery, funding for textbooks, home visits, job preparation workshops, Juvenile Justice coordination, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts, mentoring (by peers, teachers), parenting education, post-secondary education assistance, professional development for teachers, transportation, tutoring (TAKS), vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
School of Excellence in Education	Academic advisors, college fairs / centers for college prep, credit recovery, cultural competence, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dual credit courses, educational referrals, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial literacy, funding for textbooks, home visits, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job placement, job shadowing, mentoring (by teachers), paid employment, parenting education, professional development for teachers, reading / literacy program, transportation, tutoring, work

Source: CDR grant applications

Cycle 2 Grantees

Table E3.

Services Provided By Cycle 2 Grantees

Austin ISD	Academic advisors, at-risk counselors, child care, classes for parents, credit recovery, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial literacy, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, interdisciplinary teams, interview training / feedback, job internship, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), motivational speakers, paid employment, professional development for teachers, services for students with special needs (off-site program for parenting dropouts), tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling
Carrizo Springs ISD	At-risk counselors, career paths, child care, classes for parents, credit recovery, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial literacy, funding for textbooks, incentives to students, job internship, job placement, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by teachers), paid employment, peer-to-peer tutoring, summer programs, teen parenting education, tutoring
Corsicana ISD	Academic acceleration (credit acceleration), academic advisors, career paths, classes for parents, credit recovery, dual credit courses, financial literacy, funding for textbooks, home visits, incentives to students, interview training / feedback, job internship, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by adult non-school staff), paid employment, preventive health services, transportation, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
Dallas ISD	Classes for parents, credit recovery, dual credit courses, GED classes, incentives to students, interview training / feedback, job placement, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (not specified), preventive health services, summer programs, tutoring, vocational education
Dallas Can!	Classes for parents, college fairs / centers for college prep, community service, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, incentives to students, job internship, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, mentoring (by adult non-school staff), motivational speakers, preventive health services, professional development for teachers, teen parenting education, transportation, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
Del Valle ISD	Behavior management (e.g., anger, discipline matters), credit recovery, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), individual graduation / education plans, interdisciplinary teams, job internship, job placement, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (not specified), professional development for teachers, reading / literacy program, specific services for students with special needs, summer programs, tutoring, vocational education
Everman ISD	Academic advisors, behavior management (gang awareness), career paths, classes for parents, credit recovery, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial literacy, home visits, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, interview training / feedback, job internship, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by adult non-school staff), paid employment, preventive health services (for substance abuse), professional development for teachers, summer programs, teen parenting education, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
George Gervin Academy Charter	Child care, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), home visits, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job placement, job preparation workshops, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by adult non-school staff), motivational speakers, paid employment, preventive health services, reading / literacy program, staff member for providing outside referrals, teen parenting education, transportation, tutoring, vocational education
Harlandale ISD	Academic acceleration (credit acceleration), career paths, child care, college fairs / centers for college prep, college fairs (college night), community service, credit recovery, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, job internship, job preparation workshops, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by adult non-school staff), reading / literacy program, summer programs, tutoring, vocational education (CONTINUED)

Table E3. (continued)

Services Provided By Cycle 2 Grantees

McAllen ISD	Academic acceleration (credit acceleration), attempts to improve school climate, career paths, classes for parents, college fairs / centers for college prep, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), home visits, job internship, job shadowing, paid employment, preventive health services, professional development for teachers, staff member for providing outside referrals, teen parenting education, vocational education
Palestine ISD	Academic acceleration (credit acceleration), at-risk counselors, behavior management (e.g., anger, discipline matters), credit recovery, dropout recovery, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job preparation workshops, mentoring (by adult non-school staff), paid employment, pregnancy services (pre-natal care, offsite instruction), preventive health services, staff member for providing outside referrals, tutoring, vocational education
Pasadena ISD	Academic acceleration, academic advisors, behavior management (e.g., anger, discipline matters), career paths, child care, credit recovery, staff member for providing outside referrals, financial aid, financial literacy, home visits, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job preparation workshops, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), paid employment, scholarships for post-secondary education, preventive health services, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
Plainview ISD	Classes for parents, community service, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, financial literacy, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, interview training / feedback, job internship, job preparation workshops, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (by adult non-school staff), motivational speakers, paid employment, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
San Antonio	Academic advisors, behavior management (e.g., anger, discipline matters), character education, child care, classes for parents, credit recovery, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dual credit courses, home visits, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job preparation workshops, Juvenile Justice coordination, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), paid employment, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education
Snyder ISD	Academic acceleration (credit acceleration), attempts to improve school climate, classes for parents, community service, credit recovery, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, GED classes, home visits, incentives to students, individual graduation / education plans, job internship, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (not specified), paid employment, tutoring, vocational education
Spring Branch ISD	Academic acceleration, classes for parents, credit recovery, cultural enrichment, dedicated staff member for providing outside referrals, dual credit courses, family involvement (fairs, sessions, progress reports), financial aid, financial literacy, job internship, job placement, job shadowing, means for improving attendance / truancy (e.g., attendance contracts), mentoring (including by adult non-school staff), paid employment, summer programs, tutoring, vocational assessments / career counseling, vocational education

Source: CDR grant applications

Appendix F: Missing Data Analysis for TAKS Results

Table F1:

Missing Data Analysis
Cycle 1 CDR Students Included in TAKS-Math Analyses vs. Those Who Are Not

Characteristic	Students Included in TAKS-Math Analyses		Students Not Included in TAKS-Math Analyses	
	n	%	n	%
At Risk	2,242	80.2%	1,016	90.3%
Limited English Proficient	378	13.5%	334	29.7%
Special Education	181	6.5%	523	21.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	2,137	76.5%	967	86.0%
Grade Level at Baseline				
Grade 8	938	33.5%	725	27.5%
Grade 9	1,001	35.8%	407	15.5%
Grade 10	827	29.6%	374	14.2%
Grade 11	31	1.1%	1,129	42.9%
Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	607	21.7%	448	17.0%
Hispanic	1,838	65.7%	1,800	68.3%
White	327	11.7%	219	8.3%
Gender				
Male	1,383	49.5%	1,310	51.2%
Female	1,413	50.5%	1,251	48.9%

Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08, 2008–09, AND 2009–10 data

Table F2:

Missing Data Analysis
Cycle 1 CDR Students Included in TAKS-Reading Analyses vs. Those Who Are Not

Characteristic	Students Included in TAKS-Reading Analyses		Students Not Included in TAKS-Reading Analyses	
	n	%	n	%
At Risk	2,315	80.8%	943	89.4%
Limited English Proficient	408	14.2%	304	28.8%
Special Education	221	7.7%	483	20.4%
Economically Disadvantaged	2,199	76.7%	906	86.0%
Grade Level at Baseline				
Grade 8	973	33.9%	690	26.9%
Grade 9	1,042	36.3%	366	14.3%
Grade 10	844	29.4%	357	13.9%
Grade 11	9	0.3%	1,151	44.9%
Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	611	21.3%	444	17.3%
Hispanic	1,899	66.2%	1,738	67.8%
White	332	11.6%	215	8.4%
Gender				
Male	1,426	49.7%	1,267	50.9%
Female	1,441	50.3%	1,223	49.1%

Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08, 2008–09, AND 2009–10 data

Table F3:

Missing Data Analysis
Cycle 1 CDR Students Included in TAKS-Science Analyses vs. Those Who Are Not

Characteristic	Students Included in TAKS-Science Analyses		Students Not Included in TAKS-Science Analyses	
	n	%	n	%
At Risk	697	80.9%	2,561	83.8%
Limited English Proficient	84	9.7%	628	20.5%
Special Education	59	6.8%	645	14.8%
Economically Disadvantaged	629	73.0%	2,475	81.0%
Grade Level at Baseline				
Grade 8	11	1.3%	1,652	36.2%
Grade 9	0	0.0%	1,408	30.8%
Grade 10	820	95.0%	381	8.3%
Grade 11	32	3.7%	1,128	24.7%
Race/Ethnicity				
African-American	175	20.3%	882	19.3%
Hispanic	558	64.7%	3,080	67.4%
White	125	14.5%	425	9.3%
Gender				
Male	384	44.6%	2,309	51.4%
Female	478	55.5%	2,186	48.6%

Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08, 2008–09, AND 2009–10 data

Appendix G: Hierarchical Linear Models of CDR Students

Hierarchical Linear Models of CDR students

Introduction:

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how student-level and school-level predictors were related to academic achievement of CDR participants. The outcomes of interest were student achievement levels in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading (as measured by scale scores), as well as rates at which CDR students met standards in these two subject areas. In addition to a standard set of predictors (e.g., student demographics, special education status, at risk status), the evaluation team included variables of immediate policy interest. For example, the team investigated the effect of time students spent in CDR. Students who were exposed to the program for more hours were hypothesized to have stronger gains in academic achievement. The team also investigated how schools and grantees differed in these findings, and the role that services or service delivery models may have had in the results.

Hierarchical Linear Models (HLM)

For the evaluation of CDR, Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was the appropriate technique for analyzing our data due to nesting – students were nested within schools. This nesting structure led to the correlation among observations and thus conventional regression techniques would underestimate standard errors (Hox, 2002).[53] SAS PROC GLIMMIX was chosen to implement HLM and analyze the data for this report.

The subject areas examined were mathematics and reading (to be more precise, 9th grade reading, and ELA at the 10th grade and exit level). For each subject area, the evaluation team examined two types of dependent variables. One was the TAKS scale score and the other was whether a given student met the state standard in TAKS-Math/reading. For the modeling of the scale scores, the evaluation team used HLM since the outcomes are continuous variables. At level 1 of the HLM analysis, TAKS scale score was predicted as a function of a linear combination of level-1 (student-level) and level-2 (school-level) variables, the description of which are presented later. In this HLM model, only the intercepts or the school effects (*u*'s below) were treated as random effects. [54]

Level 1: $Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * X_{ij} \ldots + r_{ij}$

Level 2: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} * X_{j} \ldots + u_{0j}$

Level 2: $\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$

where

[53] HLM can partial out the variance and covariance into within and between variance components, which HLM does by having error terms at both the individual and school levels. In this way, problems of dependence will be solved because the student error term will take away the correlated school-level errors of similar students by shunting that "likeness" into the level 2 error term.

[54] This means that the school averages of the outcome, adjusted for covariates in the model, were weighted by the reliability of the school averages. This precision weighting technique is based on the idea that (a) the schools that contributed a larger number of subjects and produced a smaller outcome variance are statistically more reliable and (b) they should influence the estimation of the grand average of the school averages at a greater magnitude (than other schools with imprecise measurement). As a result, the HLM intercept (β_{0j}), which is the grand average of reliability-weighted school averages, is a conservative estimate (devoid of the influence of imprecisely measured outliers).

- Level 1 is student and Level 2 is school.
- Postscripts i and j index, respectively, student and school.
- Y represents a posttest TAKS scale score (2008–09 or 2009–10).
- β's are Level 1 parameters and γ's are Level 2 parameters.
- *X's* with postscripts i and j are Level 1 independent variables and X's with a postscript j are Level 2 independent variables.
- *r*'s and *u*'s are independently and identically distributed residuals, respectively, of Level 1 and Level 2.
- All predictors, including dichotomous variables (coded 0 and 1), are centered around the grand mean, so the intercept value corresponds to the outcome value of a subject who has average values on all predictors.

The exploratory HLM analysis, however, indicated that the between-school variance was relatively small and the reliability of the school averages were generally low, which made our models difficult to converge. If the between-school variance was too small to estimate and the model did not converge, the evaluation team chose to present the result of the simple OLS regression model. In the case of HGLM to be discussed later, the simple model will be a logistic regression model. Because some clustering effect may be still present, standard errors may be underestimated in the simple models. If the model converges and the between-school variance is trivial in size, we will still present the HLM results, so standard errors are not underestimated and the statistical tests remain as conservative as possible.

Some additional analyses were conducted. In modeling the school-level effects as random effects, the issue of interest was how the thirteen schools differ in the outcomes and how grantee membership is associated with each school's performance. The exploratory analysis indicated that our data does not support the complex school-level analysis using grantee information as level-2 predictors in the HLM model. This was due to the relatively small sample size of schools (*n*=13) and grantees (*n*=5) and, as mentioned, the low variance between schools. Instead, we investigated the school-specific outcome results and examined whether schools served by some grantees performed better than others.

Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM):

For the modeling of whether students met the state standard, the evaluation team used a form of Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM) called a multilevel logistic regression model. Using the logit function and the binary distribution as the assumed error form, it models the likelihood of a student meeting the standard (as opposed to not meeting the standard). For the control of prior year achievement status, we used the student status indicating whether a student met the standard or not. The rest of the independent variables remained the same as in the HLM models.

Level 1: $\log(P_{ij}/1-P_{ij}) = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j} * X_{ij} \ldots$

Level 2: $\beta_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01} * X_{j} \ldots + u_{0j}$

Level 2: $\beta_{1j} = \gamma_{10}$

- *P* represents a subject's probability of meeting the standard in a test.
- *u*'s are school-specific residuals that are independently and identically distributed.

The model estimates school effects (or put differently, the differences between schools in the likelihood of a student meeting standard in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading) as random effects (γ's). As mentioned earlier, the exploratory analysis found that the between-school variance was small in size. When the HGLM model did not converge, we removed the random effects from the model and simplified it to be a multivariate logistic regression model. This model can be considered as a special case of HGLM where the between-school variance is set to zero.

Sample and Variables

The initial database (i.e., student upload datasets for TAKS-Reading and TAKS-Math achievement) included 5,432 subjects. When several data filters were applied, the sample size was reduced to 2,051 for the TAKS-Math analysis and 2,160 for the TAKS-Reading analysis. Most of the data attrition occurred due to the unavailability of the pre- and/or post- achievement information. This causes a concern for externality validity of results.

Outcome variables included two results from the TAKS exam: (1) scale score of the TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading exams and (2) a dichotomous variable measuring whether a student met the TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading standard (based on predetermined threshold values in the TAKS scores).

At the student level, dummy variables were created to capture the following measures: student grade level (Grade 9, 10, 11, 12), economic disadvantage (no disadvantage vs. disadvantage indicated by free lunch, reduced lunch, and other forms of economic disadvantage), at risk status (defined by TEA), male, race (African-American, Hispanic and White), and special education. There were two continuous variables measuring the number of hours students participated in CDR and the prior year test score. The prior year TAKS scores, used for the HLM analysis, were not comparable by different grade levels (i.e., they are not vertically equated), so they were transformed to z-scores with a mean of 0 and standard deviation of 1 within each subject and grade level. For the HGLM analysis, we used a dummy variable to describe whether a student met the state standard or not in the prior year. The Level 2 variables were Title 1 status (dichotomous variable), urbanicity (dichotomous variable; urban versus suburban schools), and charter school status (dichotomous variable). The sample included all schools in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, and data were pooled across cohorts. The HLMs therefore test the effectiveness of CDR in improving academic achievement between the baseline year and the end of the first year that students were in the program.

Findings from Descriptive Analyses:

Table G1 presents the results of descriptive analyses of the school- and student-level variables used in the analyses. Only a small proportion of the sample was comprised of 12th grade students because high school seniors took TAKS exit-level tests only when they did not pass the tests in earlier grades. Over three-quarters of students in the samples were economically disadvantaged and were also considered at risk. About two-thirds of the sample consisted of Hispanic students. On average, the subjects received slightly more than 6 hours of participation time in CDR.

Table G1:

Descriptive Statistics for the CDR Student Analyses

Student-Level Variables	TAKS-Math (*n*=2,052)		TAKS-Reading (*n*=2,160)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pretest Scale Z-Score (2007–08)	-0.54	0.84	-0.47	0.83
Posttest Scale Z-Score (2008–09)	-0.58	0.82	-0.56	0.88
Met Standard Pretest (2007–08)	46%		79%	
Met Standard Posttest (2008–09)	54%		81%	
Grade 9	42%		42%	
Grade 10	29%		30%	
Grade 11	29%		28%	
Economic Disadvantage	76%		76%	
At Risk Status	80%		80%	
Female	50%		50%	
African American	22%		22%	
Hispanic	65%		66%	
White	13%		12%	
Special Education	7%		8%	
Total Number of CDR Hours	6.32	9.26	6.27	9.15
Days of Absence from CDR	14.01	19.47	14.53	20.04
School-Level Variables (39 schools for Math & 41 schools for Reading)				
Charter	4%		5%	
Rural	37%		37%	
Suburb	51%		50%	
Urban	8%		8%	

Note: Due to rounding, percents may not add up to 100.

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08; PEIMS, 2008–09; Common Core of Data, 2008–09

Findings from the HLM and HGLM analyses

HGLM Analysis of Students' Meeting State Standards

Table G2 reports the results of Model 1 and 2 that examined the characteristics that best predict students meeting state standards in TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading. In both subjects, the lack of variance between schools made the HGLM computation difficult. The TAKS-Math model did not converge and thus the result of the simplified model without the random effects is presented. The TAKS-Reading model converged and the between-school variance, though statistically not significant, was reported.

Only a few of the predictors produced statistically significant results ($p<.05$). For both TAKS subjects, special education status of students was negatively related to the likelihood of meeting the standard and this effect was statistically significant. The prior-year results in the same outcomes were also strong and positive predictors. Students in charter schools were significantly more likely to pass TAKS-Math, but were less likely to pass TAKS-Reading, controlling for other variables. The number of service hours received by CDR students did not predict success (or failure) in a student's ability to meet both TAKS-Math and TAKS-Reading standards.

Table G2:
Models 1 and 2: HGLM Results Predicting Students Who Met Standards in Math and Reading (Cycle 1&2)

	Model 1:				Model 2:			
	TAKS-Math Outcomes (Met Standard)				TAKS-Reading Outcomes (Met Standard)			
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Stat Sig.	Math Odds Ratio	Coefficient	Std. Error	Stat Sig.	Reading Odds Ratio
Student-Level Data								
Intercept	-0.39	(0.33)			0.83	(0.39)	*	
Pretest Met the Standard (2007–08)	1.97	(0.13)	***	7.2	2.09	(0.13)	***	8.1
Grade 10	0.11	(0.14)		1.1	-0.32	(0.15)	*	0.7
Grade 11	1.99	(0.16)	***	7.3	0.57	(0.19)	**	1.8
Economic Disadvantage	-0.11	(0.15)		0.9	0.04	(0.18)		1.0
At Risk Status	-1.04	(0.17)	***	0.4	-1.21	(0.26)	***	0.3
Female	-0.15	(0.11)		0.9	0.51	(0.13)	***	1.7
African American	-0.15	(0.16)		0.9	0.01	(0.18)		1.0
White	0.57	(0.21)	**	1.8	1.05	(0.31)	***	2.8
Special Education	-1.47	(0.26)	***	0.2	-1.30	(0.20)	***	0.3
Total Number of CDR Hours	-0.02	(0.01)		1.0	0.01	(0.01)		1.0
Days of Absences from CDR	0.00	(0.00)		1.0	0.00	(0.00)		1.0
School-Level Data								
Charter	0.91	(0.47)		2.5	-0.09	(0.46)		0.9
Rural	0.45	(0.28)		1.6	0.27	(0.27)		1.3
Suburb	-0.04	(0.26)		1.0	-0.02	(0.25)		1.0
Variance Component								
Level-2 Variance	0.09	(0.07)			0.03	(0.07)		
Level-2 Variance Explained	85%				93%			

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08; PEIMS, 2008–09; Common Core of Data, 2008–09; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

HLM Analyses of TAKS Scale Scores

Table G3 presents the results from Models 3 and 4 that examined the TAKS scale scores. Like the HGLM results, the prior year TAKS (as measured by a z score) was positively and significantly related to both outcomes. Special education status and at risk status were negatively related to both outcomes. Like the HGLM results, charter school students had higher TAKS-Math scale scores than non-charter school students, but the coefficient was only marginally significant ($p<.10$). The effect of a given student's participation in CDR was negative and statistically significant for TAKS-Math but not for TAKS-Reading. A possible explanation for this may be that services are targeted to students who need them the most (and are therefore on the strongest downward trajectory in academics).

Table G3:

Models 1 and 2: HLM Results for Scale Scores in Math and Reading (Cycle 1 & 2)

	Model 3:				Model 4:			
	TAKS-Math Outcomes (Scale Scores)				TAKS-Reading Outcomes (Scale Scores)			
	Coefficient	Std. Error	Stat Sig.		Coefficient	Std. Error	Stat Sig.	
Student-Level Data								
Intercept	0.10	(0.06)			-0.01	(0.07)		
Pretest Scale Scores (2007–08)	0.68	(0.02)	***		0.51	(0.02)	***	
Grade 10	-0.23	(0.03)	***		-0.13	(0.03)	***	
Grade 11	-0.15	(0.03)	***		-0.04	(0.04)		
Economic Disadvantage	-0.03	(0.03)			-0.02	(0.03)		
At Risk Status	-0.21	(0.03)	***		-0.26	(0.04)	***	
Female	-0.01	(0.02)			0.08	(0.03)	**	
African American	-0.08	(0.03)	*		-0.08	(0.04)	*	
White	0.09	(0.04)	*		0.19	(0.05)	***	
Special Education	-0.23	(0.04)	***		-0.36	(0.05)	***	
Total Number of CDR Hours	-0.01	(0.00)	**		0.00	(0.00)		
Days of Absence from CDR	0.00	(0.00)			0.00	(0.00)	**	
School-Level Data								
Charter	0.24	(0.10)	*		-0.04	(0.10)		
Rural	0.00	(0.06)			-0.06	(0.07)		
Suburb	-0.03	(0.06)			-0.06	(0.07)		
Variance Component								
Level-1 Variance	0.24	(0.01)	***		0.37	(0.01)	***	
Level-2 Variance	0.01	(0.00)	*		0.01	(0.00)		
Level-1 Variance Explained	58%				40%			
Level-2 Variance Explained	91%				88%			

Source: PEIMS, 2007–08; PEIMS, 2008–09; Common Core of Data, 2008–09; *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001

Appendix H: Additional Comments from the CDR Student Survey

Perhaps the best early evidence of the program's effects came from students who were served by the program. At the end of CDR Student Survey, students were asked to describe whether CDR made a difference, and if so, how. A sample of responses appears below:

Overall, would you say the program helped you in school? If so, what are some of the ways it helped you?

- *Being in this program helped me a lot to better prepare myself for life after high school. It also gave me a better perspective on college life, and all that responsibility and freedom that comes along with it.*
- *Experience being on a college campus, and improving my learning skills. The program also motivated me to attend college.*
- *From the day I joined CDR, I have learned to become very independent, socialize better with people and most importantly, I am very motivated to attend college.*
- *Helped me learn how to communicate better with others and work with little kids.*
- *I have been held accountable for all my actions and a know that I have the chance to really be anything as longs as I work hard for it.*
- *I think the program has helped me a lot because I now know how to apply for jobs and search for jobs.*
- *It has helped me to take responsibility for my school work and to take it seriously.*
- *It has helped me develop a business like behavior which helped me stay professional during school hours.*
- *It's been the highlight of my senior year, it has opened my eyes to many opportunities in life.*
- *Its helped me know how to act in an interview, but also to fill out an applications. How to respect people when they help us out.*
- *CDR helped me keep my thoughts and events in my life straight. My teacher was a very good talker and made me feel safe talking to her about my life. It also kept me from doing bad in school.*
- *Yes, because I really didn't want to be in school any more. I wanted to drop out and when I got in the program it changed my mind.*
- *It has helped me to be more organized in many ways, especially time.*
- *Yes it helped me with my credits and helped me with my baby.*
- *CDR I am attending has helped me a lot in learning job skills, learning how to apply, how to be a good worker, and how to keep my head up no matter what comes my way. It also helps me with the hours, being able to come in whenever I can and as long as I can is a big help for me especially when I am expecting. I really like this CDR program and I wish to stay here and finish off here if I can.*
- *I learned to accept some of the decisions my teachers made and listen more closely and pay more attention to what I do in class.*
- *Yes, they helped me learn how to apply for college and choose my career. They helped me learn about financial aid and admissions about colleges.*

- *I started to communicate more with teachers and ask for help when needed.*

- *They helped me to be more confident and take more care of myself and worry more about me than people who put me down and bully me.*

- *Yes, it helped me stand out more and ask more questions, take better notes and really listen to teachers more.*

Overall, would you say the program helped you in your career? If so, what are some of the ways it helped you?

- *I'm not sure about the whole career thing but it helped me get some ideas in mind.*

- *Yes because I feel that there has been so much help with guiding me in the right direction to do good in the future.*

- *It has made me open my eyes and switch my career goal in life. I want to be a nurse now due to the trip we took to the college.*

- *Well I haven't really started looking for a career path but when I do I know it will be fine because what I have learned here.*

Are there things about the program that you think did not work or could be improved? If so, what?

- *I think we could use a little more help. The teachers help us her but I would highly suggest more help, meaning tutors, for the students.*

- *I wouldn't change anything about the program. The instructors that work here are always motivating you to do great and they have big expectation from you and that's great because coming from a low SES family I've been told that I'm just going to work a minimum paying job and so on and when I got accepted here I just felt like "hey these people want me to better myself and want the best for me and for me to succeed and not just personally but in my educational field." It feels awesome to know that teachers care and share their experience with you so that way you can prepare yourself for obstacles and stuff.*

- *It could have been better if they had more speakers that were in other fields so the students have more of a variety.*

- *More field trips. I want to explore more colleges.*

- *Showing us more colleges would be nice, and not taking up our class periods to talk to us.*

- *Yes, it could be improved by doing more one-on-one assignments to individuals who learn better in that kind of environment.*

- *Get rid of the freshman. That have 3 years to catch up. Myself on the other hand, I'm 2 years behind.*

Is there anything else about the program that you wanted to mention?

- *I believe this program is great for kids like myself who only need a little push to continue successfully in life.*

- *All I wanna say is thank you to the counselors that got me into this program and for helping me put goals in life.*

- *Even though some people really may disagree with this program, it has really help me with my situation. If the students want to be here and are wanting to do what it takes for this program it can have a really great outcome.*
- *I believe it's a good program. They have helped me a lot. If it wasn't for them I believe I would still be here for 3 years.*
- *It a great program and for the people that need a second chance they should really go there.*
- *[CDR staff member] always helps my family with food, pay bills, and my mom does not worry so much.*
- *[CDR staff member] was my mom because my mom wasn't.*
- *[CDR staff member] made learning fun and help me get a job.*
- *The [CDR program] is a very good program for students planning to attend college. It gives them a glimpse of what is to come and prepares them for the standards they are held to.*
- *If things at home are not doing so well the teen will not perform better in school.*
- *We are determined and hard working but still have fun.*
- *If it was not for them pushing me, I would have dropped out of school already.*
- *My teachers are extraordinary intelligent and are role models in my life now.*
- *That this program is the best and hope that they still continue helping other kids in need so they can succeed in life.*
- *CDR has helped me in ways that have prepared me for my future. It has given me that self-confidence that I need for my career, and the strength to look forward for my goal.*