

**EVALUATION OF SUMMER SCHOOL (INTERSESSION) PROGRAM
IMPLEMENTATION IN ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS: 2004-05 REPORT**

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Executive Summary

This document contains the findings of a Districtwide evaluation focusing on the first year of implementation of the summer school (intersession) component of the re-conceptualized Standards-Based Promotion (SBP) Intervention program in classes supporting students at risk of not meeting grade level standards at the 2nd – 5th grade levels.¹ This evaluation will provide information about the initial implementation of the program. This report contains findings regarding program characteristics, program uniformity, curriculum fidelity, effectiveness of summer school (intersession) with respect to English Language Arts (ELA) instruction, and an overview of ELA and mathematics instruction in summer school (intersession).²

Research Questions

The guiding questions addressed in this report:

- What are the characteristics of the ELA component of summer school (intersession) Districtwide?
- How do ELA teachers describe their students' instructional needs?
- Is summer school (intersession) coherent and uniform with respect to ELA instruction?
- What are the characteristics of administrative support provided to ELA summer school (intersession) teachers?
- Do teachers implement ELA curricula with high fidelity?
- What are teacher and administrator perceptions of the program?
- Is ELA instruction during summer school (intersession) effective?

Findings and Recommendations

Summer School (Intersession) Characteristics

A reading mark of 2 or less during the 2nd reporting period or Periodic Writing Assessment (PWA) score of 2 or less meets the requirements of voluntary attendance. Students who receive a reading mark of 1 during the final reporting period and a PWA score of 1 are mandated to attend. An examination of SIS data revealed that 47% of the students Districtwide

¹ The SBP Intervention program is comprised of three components: intervention during regular classroom instruction, the Extended Learning Program, and summer school (intersession). Please see Slayton, J., Oliver, D., and Burley, K. (2003) for a discussion of regular classroom ELA instruction. Please see Hodson, C. and Howie, J. (2006) for a discussion of ELA instruction during the Extended Learning Program.

² Please see Foster, J. and Hodson, C. (2006) for a more thorough discussion of the mathematics component of summer school (intersession) in elementary schools.

(with language classification of EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5) who attended ELA summer school (intersession) met the criteria for voluntary attendance. The remaining 53% had a reading mark and/or PWA score of 3. One possible explanation for this finding is the following: in April, students were selected for recommendation to attend summer school (Track A Intersession). It is possible that some students who were performing below grade level at the time of recommendation improved by the end of the school year. Hence, some students may have been recommended to attend summer school (Track A intersession) even though their final mark ended up falling outside of the eligibility requirements. We were unable to determine the average number of hours students attended ELA summer school due to inconsistencies in SIS data.

Recommendation: The Central Office has provided schools with guidelines for inputting intervention-related data in SIS. School-site administrators should provide staff with support that ensures proper documentation of student participation.

When examining Student Information System (SIS) data, we discovered that all of the 17 schools in our sample had incomplete ELA summer school (intersession) data.

Recommendation: The Central Office clearly defines what intervention data should be entered into SIS. Schools need to insure that they are entering intervention data into SIS in an accurate and timely manner.

Twenty of 37 teachers reported using some type of data to inform instruction. Thirty percent of these teachers either used Student Online Assessment Report (SOAR) data exclusively or combined with other data. Students who receive instruction that is tailored to their needs benefit more than students who receive a more generalized form of instruction.

Recommendation: Slightly more than half of teachers have reported using data to meet the particular needs of their students and they should continue to do so. Forty-six percent of teachers did not report using data to individualize instruction. These teachers should do so.

Writing strategies, reading comprehension, writing conventions, reading fluency, and engaging in the writing process were the skills with which teachers stated their students needed the most assistance. In essence, teachers reported their students displayed a generalized lack of literacy skills.

Recommendation: Effective reading and writing instruction addresses: a)

phonemic awareness, b) decoding, c) fluency, d) vocabulary development, e) reading comprehension strategies, and f) instruction of writing mechanics within the context of the writing process. The Open Court Reading (OCR) curriculum contains the components of literacy intervention found to be most effective at increasing student skill levels. Assuming that the curriculum is implemented with high fidelity, one would assume that students' needs would be met.

Summer School (Intersession) Uniformity

All administrators attended summer school (intersession)-related training during 2004-05. The percentage of administrators who reported attending training nearly doubled since 2002-03. All respondents felt that they were either well trained or very well trained to manage summer school (intersession) implementation after attending training. The most frequently noted training topic was administrative (e.g., paperwork, deadlines). There was very little focus on the modeling of comprehension strategies and skills.

Nearly all teachers (48 of 54) attended training. Fifty-nine percent of these teachers (28 of 48) felt that the training they received prepared them either very well or well to teach summer school (intersession). As part of the Standards-Based Intervention Program, teachers were to be provided with training that included a strand of intervention strategies (e.g., grouping strategies, scaffolding). As with the administrators, few teachers (14 of 48) actually reported being trained on scaffolding (e.g., modeling of comprehension strategies/skills). Similarly, few (11 of 48) were trained on the use of grouping strategies. We found that 100% of teachers were observed using small-group and/or one-to-one grouping strategies. Whether modeling of comprehension strategies/skills was used during instruction will be addressed in a separate section of this report.

Recommendation: If school administrators are expected to provide support to teachers, it is important that they be provided with training that pertains directly to meeting the needs of students who are not performing at grade level. Given that small-group instruction is a hallmark of effective intervention instruction, more effort needs to be made to ensure that the professional development provided to teachers covers this topic. Furthermore, since the explicit teaching of strategies and skills is an essential component of reading and writing instruction, this topic needs to be covered also for administrators and teachers.

There was a high degree of uniformity across classrooms of curricula used during instruction. Almost all teachers (38 of 39) were observed using the Open Court Reading Anthology and/or Write Time for LAUSD Kids during ELA instruction.

Recommendation: Central Office staff has provided schools with guidelines regarding what curricula should be used during summer school (intersession). Therefore, schools need to continue in their efforts to ensure that the use of curricula during summer school (intersession) not only meets the needs of the students but is also as uniform as possible.

As in 2002-03, classrooms adhered to District guidelines with respect to student-to-teacher ratio and grade level composition. Conversely, as in 2002-03, in 2004-05, the composition of classrooms did not adhere to District guidelines with respect to the number of ELD levels per classroom. One possible explanation for this may be that school-site administrators and/or teachers placed ELLs with ELD levels 1 – 4 in these classrooms because they felt the students' needs would be better met via the ELA/Math summer school rather than the ELD summer school program. More than sixty percent of the classrooms that were comprised of English Language Learners (ELLs) and non-ELLs were composed of three or more English Language Development (ELD) levels. Research has shown that greater numbers of ELD levels in a classroom was generally related to lower student achievement gains in reading, language, and math.

Recommendation: School-site administrators need to arrange classrooms so that there are no more than two ELD levels in a classroom, if possible. If budgetary constraints prohibit reducing the ratio and/or decreasing the heterogeneity of skills in classrooms, then perhaps schools should explore ways in which to gather resources for reducing the ratio in classrooms. As stated previously, teachers may use small-group instruction to meet their students' needs. Furthermore, using a system of accountability would help keep Central Office staff informed of the extent to which school-site administrators are forming classes with the appropriate number of ELD levels.

There was a high degree of consistency in reading and writing assessments used within summer school (intersession). These findings indicate a notable increase in the uniformity of assessments in the program. Nevertheless, the District still lacks an objective and uniform measure of student progress that is not curriculum-based.

Recommendation: Reliable, valid, and objective assessments should be used to measure students' progress in the development of grade level literacy skills in both regular and intervention classrooms. These results should then be placed in the Districtwide SIS in order to facilitate the tracking of student progress over time and provide an objective measure of the effectiveness of instruction.

Additionally, the assessment results may be used in the identification of students who are at risk of not meeting grade level standards. For example, good readers read fluently, possess sufficient vocabulary to understand what they are reading, and use comprehension strategies. Therefore, it would be helpful if the District used assessments that would enable both the Central Office and teachers to track students' progress in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Although data regarding students' reading and writing proficiency was collected in the SOAR database, this data was to be used to guide instruction. The assessments from which the data is culled were not designed to mark students' progress. In reading intervention literature, it has been recommended that students in first through third grade be assessed at least three times a year in order to accurately identify elementary students who may be at risk of having reading difficulties (Torgesen, 2002). Once identified, said students could be provided with the appropriate intervention.

Nearly all teachers (47 of 55) received some type of administrative support regarding the implementation of summer school (intersession). In most instances, an administrator provided this support. Twenty-seven of 55 teachers felt the support they received met their needs. According to teachers, administrators provided assistance with paperwork and curricula implementation with the greatest frequency. No more than 13 of 45 received support pertaining to the topics of grouping strategies and scaffolding.

Recommendation: Summer school (intersession) is an intervention program targeted towards students who are performing below grade level standards in reading, writing, and/or mathematics. Therefore, as stated previously, teachers need to be provided with more support regarding the topic of using intervention strategies effectively. Instructional Coaches may be able to provide the required support.

Curriculum Fidelity

As has been found in regular classrooms, teachers implemented different components of the curriculum with varying degrees of fidelity. It appears that elements of literacy instruction such as phonemics and grammar were addressed with a greater frequency than reading strategies/skills and writing-process instruction. Moreover, when reading strategies/skills instruction did occur, teachers typically did not define the strategies/skills nor explain why one should use a particular strategy/skill.

Recommendation: School-site administrators should provide teachers with enough support to increase the likelihood that they are using the mandated curricula with

a high degree of fidelity. Additionally, professional development should stress the importance of implementing the components of the curricula that focus on the explicit instruction of reading strategies/skills and writing-process instruction.

Effectiveness of Summer School (Intersession)

Thirty-three of 55 teachers felt that the program was somewhat effective at bringing students closer to grade level. Nineteen teachers felt the program was either effective or very effective at bringing students closer to grade level. The remaining three teachers felt that the program was not effective at all. Of the forty-eight teachers who responded, the most frequently stated reason why the program brought students closer to grade level was due to additional opportunities to review/reinforce/practice skills and concepts such as reading comprehension and increased writing practice. Thirty-nine percent of teachers felt a smaller student-to-teacher ratio would increase the effectiveness of summer school (intersession). This finding corresponds with literature that has found that effective intervention instruction is intensive (e.g., has ratio smaller than 20:1, provides at-risk students with additional instructional opportunities).

T-test analysis revealed that there was no statistically or educationally significant pre-post differences in the sentence comprehension skills (as measured by the RLI) of students who attended summer school (intersession). These findings must be qualified in the following manner. First, there was very little evidence of teachers explicitly modeling reading comprehension strategies/skills. If students are not provided with direct literacy instruction, it is unlikely that their skills will improve significantly. Second, it appears that the hours of additional instruction was not sufficient to result in a significant increase in achievement. However, t-test analysis did reveal that student's mean reading fluency scores did increase during the summer school (intersession) period.

Recommendation: As stated previously, classrooms should have as small a student-to-teacher ratio as is feasible. However, teachers need to utilize grouping strategies to work within the constraints of the student-to-teacher ratio. In addition, students should be provided with as many additional learning opportunities as is practical during the school year via the Extended Learning Program (e.g., having multiple sessions of ELP throughout the year that a student may attend, depending on data indicators of progress towards grade level standards with additional support provided during the summer, if needed). Teachers need to be provided with professional development pertaining to the explicit literacy instruction. It is important to reiterate that the instructional quality

in summer school (intersession) classrooms is reflective of instruction in the regular classroom. Therefore, unless an improvement in instruction occurs Districtwide, it is unlikely that instructional quality in summer school (intersession) will change significantly.

Introduction

This document contains the findings of a Districtwide evaluation focusing on the implementation of the summer school (intersession) component of the re-conceptualized Standards-Based Promotion (SBP) Intervention program at the elementary school level. The program supports students at risk of not meeting grade level standards at the 2nd – 5th grade levels by providing them with additional instructional time. This evaluation will provide information about English Language Arts (ELA) instruction during the initial implementation of the program.³

The report contains four sections. The introductory section presents the background of the evaluation including a description of the program, the theoretical framework into which the evaluation is set, and the research questions. Section II presents the methodology employed in the study, including a discussion of the sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. Section III contains the findings for Year One. Section IV presents the conclusions and implications of the findings.

Standards-Based Intervention Program

Studies find that retention programs that incorporate intervention programs are more successful than those programs that do not.⁴ For this reason, LAUSD provided various extended learning opportunities to at-risk students. The goal of these programs was to provide students who were at risk of not meeting grade level standards with additional support to prevent their retention. In the past, intervention programs were primarily designed at local schools. This resulted in intervention programs that lacked coherence and an effective accountability system (Hodson, 2004a; Hodson, 2004b; Slayton, Hodson, & Neuhaus, 2002). In 2004, LAUSD intervention programs were re-conceptualized. Central Office staff made an effort to create a uniform intervention program that was more coherent, efficient, and cost-effective than its predecessors. As described in the Intervention Informative memo, the elements of this research-

³ The SBP Intervention program is comprised of three components: intervention during regular classroom instruction, the Extended Learning Program, and summer school (intersession). Please see Slayton, J., Oliver, D., and Burley, K. (2003) for a discussion of regular classroom ELA instruction. Please see Foster, J. and Hodson, C. (2006) for a discussion of the mathematics component of summer school (intersession) in elementary schools.

⁴ Memorandum No. M-10, LAUSD, August 10, 2001.

based intervention program were:⁵

1. **Coherence:** Intervention must be consistent both within schools and across the District. Prescribed intervention must correspond to regular classroom instruction. Additionally, ongoing monitoring of intervention via benchmark assessments will allow for the identification of students in need of assistance and the shaping of the program to meet the needs of said students.
2. **Cost-effectiveness:** Intervention programs must be self-supporting.
3. **Accountability:** Operational accountability will be ensured by a monitoring system that tracks student attendance and utilization of fiscal resources. Instructional accountability will be accomplished by ensuring that all instructional decisions be data driven. Regular classroom benchmark assessments should be used to both guide instruction and measure student progress within the intervention program.
4. **Attractiveness:** Intervention must be seen as beneficial by both students and teachers. Engaging instructional strategies and incentives may be utilized to increase student attendance. Teachers must see that there is coherence between intervention programs and regular classroom instruction. Additionally, teacher buy-in may be sustained by providing them with tangible results of their instructional efforts.
5. **Efficiency:** Intervention program management and reporting must not be labor-intensive for school-site personnel. Systems must be in place for the accurate identification of students in need of academic intervention. Effective systems will result in increased cost-effectiveness of intervention programs and better-informed decision-making.

This comprehensive program, which addressed literacy, mathematics, and English language development (ELD), employed a three-tiered approach to intervention. This study focused on the ELA instruction and these curricula will be detailed later. Students were provided with an increasing level of support at each tier. Tier 1 provided the foundation of intervention – students’ needs were addressed within the regular classroom setting. At Tier 2, students were provided with support outside of the regular classroom setting either before or after school or on the weekend. This needs-based support was correlated to regular classroom instruction. Students

⁵ Intervention Informative, LAUSD, June 4, 2004.

who were unable to perform at or near grade level after Tier 1 and 2 level support progressed to the Tier 3 support program. This program occurred during students' summer school (intersession). Students were provided with a "focused curriculum using specific, targeted instructional strategies to students in small groups."⁶

Professional Development

There were two tiers of intervention-related professional development. In the first tier, teachers were provided with training, which included a strand of intervention strategies (e.g., differentiation of instruction, grouping strategies, and scaffolding), and training on the literacy, mathematics, and ELD curricula to be used during intervention. The second tier, which has yet to be put in place, will consist of professional development centers dedicated to intervention training. During this training, teachers will participate in lesson study and discussions regarding student work. After receiving training on intervention strategies and curricula, teachers will be certified to teach in the District's intervention programs.

Theoretical Framework

In accordance with the Standards-Based Promotion and Intervention Policy, students must be provided with a curriculum that is closely aligned with the state and District content standards. Students who are not meeting grade level standards should be identified early, provided with on-going pre-retention intervention opportunities, and retained during the subsequent school year only if they are still unable to meet grade level standards upon completion of a given grade. Researchers have suggested that policies, such as this one, that focus on early identification of at-risk students and pre-retention interventions are the best alternatives to social promotion and grade retention (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Haas 1995; Labaree, 1984; Rudolph & Jennings, 1999).

Extended Learning Opportunities

It has been found that greater instructional time can have significant and positive effects on school achievement (Fusaro, 1997; Karweit, 1976). For example, Leslie and Allen (1999) found that students participating in an after-school literacy program gained more in reading

⁶ Intervention Informative, LAUSD, June 4, 2004.

grade level scores during one semester than students who did not participate in the intervention. As part of its intervention program, LAUSD has provided students at risk of not meeting grade level standards with a greater degree of exposure to reading, writing, and mathematics instruction than their grade-level counterparts. Although increased instructional time has been found to affect school achievement positively, it has also been generally accepted that students vary in the amount of time needed for learning. Frequently, intervention occurs within delineated times; however, this time is likely to be too much for some learners and not enough for others (Gettinger, 1984; Torgesen, 2004).

Characteristics of Effective ELA Instruction

Reading research has shown that there are five skills that good readers possess: a) phonemic awareness – the awareness of the phonemic elements in words, b) the ability to decode using knowledge about phonics, c) the ability to read fluently, d) the ability to decipher word meaning instantly due to an increasingly large vocabulary, and e) the ability to use comprehension strategies – think actively while reading in order to construct meaning (Torgesen, 2004). When provided with interventions that address the aforementioned skills in a comprehensive, explicit, and intensive manner, students at risk of reading failure show greater reading growth than their counterparts who received interventions that do not cover these skills as thoroughly (Torgesen, 2004). Furthermore, the early identification of children at risk of reading failure and provision of systematic, intensive instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies has been shown to reduce the percentage of students reading below basic levels to less than 6% (Torgesen, 2002).

Effective reading instruction must comprehensively cover the above-identified essential skills related to proficient reading. This instruction must also be explicit. According to Torgesen, explicit instruction is “instruction that does not leave anything to chance and does not make assumptions about skills and knowledge that children will require on their own” (2004). Correspondingly, Roehler and Duffy (1984) theorized that comprehension strategy instruction should be scaffolded in the following manner: a) teachers should explain and model the use of comprehension strategies; b) students should practice these strategies on their own, with the teachers’ assistance, as needed; c) teachers should encourage the transfer of strategy use by

explaining to students when and where strategies should be used; and d) cueing and prompting of strategies should continue until students use them autonomously. Duffy et al. (1987) found that the use of direct explanation strategy instruction resulted in students performing significantly better than their counterparts who did not receive such instruction.

An examination of effective writing instruction research has revealed an increasing emphasis on instruction that focuses on the writing process rather than the writing product (Kameeuni & Carnine, 1998). The writing process consists of five stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Furthermore, it has been found that writing conventions instruction that occurs during the writing process is more effective than writing conventions instruction that occurs in isolation. According to Bromley (2003), studies show that isolating the teaching of writing conventions from the writing process has shown to have no effect or a detrimental effect on students' writing. This assertion is supported by Wharton-McDonald, et al. (as cited in Langer, 2001) finding that in effective classrooms, "skills were taught explicitly but in connection with real reading and writing activities" (p. 840).

Characteristics of Effective Intervention Instruction

Effective intervention instruction must be more intensive than regular instruction. This is because students who have gaps in learning and skills that caused them to be identified as at-risk, must improve their reading skills at a faster rate than their grade-level achieving counterparts. Instructional intensity may be achieved by increasing instructional time and/or by providing students with one-to-one or small-group (3 to 5 students) instruction (Torgesen, 2004; Quatroche, 1999).

Moreover, research on effective intervention programs has established that "instruction for struggling readers needs to be congruent with the regular classroom instruction so that the two programs are coordinated" (Quatroche, 1999, p. 3). The same can be said for writing instruction. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the effectiveness of the aforementioned program characteristics is tempered by quality of instruction. Without excellent instruction provided by highly skilled personnel, the comprehensiveness, process-orientation, intensity, explicitness, and congruency of the instruction is inconsequential. As Torgesen stated, "the actual reading impairment a child shows at any point is always a result of an interaction between

the child’s degree of disability and the strength of the instruction provided” (2004). High caliber instruction should be present during both the regular classroom and intervention.

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

Teachers must be trained to properly implement curricula they will use during instruction. At the organizational (school) level, important characteristics of effective professional development include an integrated focus on the organization’s ultimate goals (student achievement); an organizational capacity for ongoing improvement; an organizational structure that promotes inquiry, reflection, and challenges the status quo; and structures and systems that foster the generation and sharing of information. There should be a focus on instruction as the core activity, and administrators should promote opportunities for leadership among staff members. Important interpersonal characteristics of the participants are trust, a commitment to learning, positive relationships, listening and dialogue, and using mistakes as learning experiences (Guskey, 2000, National Development Council, 1995, Elmore, 2002, Fullan, 2001, and Preskill & Torres, 1999 as cited in Rivera, Burley, & Sass, 2004). The presence of these elements in ELA summer school (intersession) training is beyond the scope of this report. However, it is important that Central Office and school-site providers of professional development keep these elements in mind when designing professional development. Effective ELA professional development should include instruction on “explaining what they are teaching, modeling their thinking processes, encouraging student inquiry, and keeping students engaged” (National Reading Panel, 2000).

The work presented in this evaluation has been informed by this research and research focusing on student retention policies (Pierson & Connell, 1992). This work builds on retention and intervention research by focusing on the interactional dynamics of the pre-retention classroom situation for students who are not meeting grade level standards. Using the tools of the classroom ethnographer,⁷ on-site sustained observations of teacher and learner behaviors, detailed fieldnotes, surveys, and assessment data, we are able to document the extent to which

⁷This evaluation does not claim to be an ethnographic study; rather techniques and tools of the classroom ethnographer, such as documenting in narrative form the events and interactions observed, were used to increase understanding of the classroom context.

students are receiving and benefiting from pre-retention intervention opportunities provided by the Standards-Based Promotion and Intervention policy.

Standards-Based Intervention Program: ELA/Math Summer School (Intersession) Program

The LAUSD provided various extended learning opportunities to at-risk students. One form of this additional instructional support was summer school (intersession). There were both mandatory and voluntary components to the program. This program was “designed to provide an intensive phonics-based reading and written language arts program for all students...and appropriate English language development for English Learners.”⁸ Each session was to last 80 instructional hours with a concentration on literacy, written language, and/or mathematics. The recommended student to teacher ratio was 20:1. Teachers were mandated to attend training appropriate to their assignment. Summer school (intersession) would be composed of students meeting any of the following criteria detailed in Table 1 below along with students selected based upon Individualized Education Program (IEP) determination.⁹

⁸ Memorandum No. Mem-1638, Beyond the Bell Branch, March 18, 2005.

⁹ Memorandum No. Mem-1638, Beyond the Bell Branch, March 18, 2005 and Bulletin No. BUL-601, Beyond the Bell Branch, December 17, 2003.

Table 1

Summer school (intersession) ELA Eligibility and SBP ELA Retention Criteria

	Grade Levels	Summer school (intersession) Eligibility Criteria	Grade Levels	Retention Criteria
Mandatory	2-5	EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD 5 Reading mark of 1 on Final report card and Periodic Writing Assessment score of 1	2-3	EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD 5 Reading mark of 1 on Final report card and Periodic Writing Assessment score of 1
	K-5	English Learners at ELD 1 – 4 Remains at the same ELD level two or more years based on the overall score of the annual CELDT and the ELD Performance Assignment		
Voluntary	2-5	EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD 5 Reading mark of 1 or 2 on Reporting Period 2 or Periodic Writing Assessment score of 1 or 2	K-5	English Learners at ELD 1 – 4 Remains at the same ELD level two or more years based on the overall score of the annual CELDT and the ELD Performance Assignment
	K-5	English Learners at ELD 1 – 4 Remains at the same ELD level between one and two years based on the overall score of the annual CELDT and the ELD Performance Assignment		

Summer School (Intersession) ELA Curricula¹⁰

The instructional content of the elementary program consisted of the Open Court Reading Program (OCR) Unit 3 (Literacy during Fall Intersession) or Unit 6 (Literacy during Spring Intersession or Summer) and Write Time for LAUSD Kids Unit 3 or 6 (Written Language).¹¹

Research Questions

The guiding questions addressed in this report are as follows:

- 1) What are the characteristics of the ELA component of summer school (intersession)

¹⁰ This curricula is for EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD 5

¹¹ Summer school (intersession) teachers were given an Instructional Guide that provided them with guidance as to how to apply OCR with a high degree of fidelity to the curriculum. This additional support was made available in an effort to improve implementation of OCR.

Districtwide?

- 2) How do ELA summer school (intersession) teachers describe their students' instructional needs?
- 3) Are the ELA curricula and assessments utilized during summer school (intersession) aligned and used uniformly across the District?
- 4) What are the characteristics of administrative support provided to ELA summer school (intersession) teachers?
- 5) Do teachers implement ELA curricula with high fidelity?
- 6) Is ELA instruction during summer school (intersession) effective?

Method

This section presents the methodology employed in the evaluation of ELA instruction during the implementation of the summer school (intersession) component of the Standards-Based Promotion and Intervention Policy during the 2004-05 school year. It contains a discussion of the sample selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

ELA Sample Selection

A sub-sample of 17 elementary schools from the Extended Learning Program evaluation were selected (Hodson, C & Howie, J., 2006).¹² Within each school, three ELA classes (Grades 2 – 5) were randomly selected. In addition to classroom observations, we administered the Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF) to ELA students grades 2 – 5 and the Reading-Level Indicator (RLI) to ELA students grades 3 – 5. Table 2 below summarizes the sample selection procedure. The following grades are represented: 2nd (25%), 3rd (29%), 4th (32%), and 5th (25%). Some classrooms contained multiple grades; hence, percentages may total more than 100. Finally, language arts summer school (intersession) classrooms on the following calendars comprise the sample: Single-track (94%) and Track A (6%).

¹² All 17 schools have on-site summer school (intersession) programs. For logistical reasons, only schools with on-site summer school (Track A - Intersession) were selected. Although districts 2 – 5, 7, and 8 are represented in this sub-sample, the sampling process was purposive, therefore the results are not be generalizable to the other local districts.

Table 2

Sample Selection Procedure

		Summer school (intersession) Students	Total ^a
Stage 1		17 Elementary schools selected for participation	
Stage 2	Observation	Approximately 3 classrooms per school randomly selected	50 summer school (intersession) language arts classrooms observed
Stage 3	Testing	Approximately 20 students from each summer school (intersession) language arts classroom tested	TOSWRF: 812 students grades 2 – 5 tested RLI: 593 students grades 3 – 5 tested

^aTotal refers to language arts classrooms with 2 days of observation. Total also refers to students with pre and post-test scores for the TOSWRF and RLI. Due to various reasons, we do not have 2 days of observation for all teachers or pre-post scores for all students.

Measures

Assessment

The Reading-Level Indicator (RLI) and the Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency (TOSWRF) were administered to a sample of students as a pre-post measure of reading achievement progress. The RLI measures students’ sentence reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. The TOSWRF measures a student’s ability to recognize printed words accurately and efficiently (reading fluency).

The culminating activity for each unit of the Write Time for LAUSD Kids curricula is the administration of a writing prompt that is similar to the Open Court Assessment writing prompt for the corresponding unit. Students who are mandated to attend summer school (intersession) are re-administered the Periodic Writing Assessment (PWA) or the English Language Development (ELD) Writing Assignment during the last week of class. We originally intended to use scores from the Write Time for LAUSD Kids Unit 6 prompt as a pre-post comparison with

the students' writing assessment scores. However, we could not because the majority of students did not have this data in the Student Information System (SIS).

Classroom Observations

Observation was the primary data collection tool used in this study. Trained data collectors carried out the observations. A classroom visit usually lasted from 2 to 4 hours during the reading/language arts instructional period. Data collectors visited classrooms for a total of two days each during the summer of 2005. Descriptive data (taken from field notes and surveys of school administrators and teachers) were then coupled with quantifiable data taken from observation instruments and student records to address the research questions. Fieldnotes and reflective notes were the data collected during the observation.

Fieldnotes are defined as a written narrative describing in concrete terms and great detail the duration and nature of the activities and interactions observed. Classroom observers became the "eyes and ears" of the project and their notes described the overall context in which instruction took place.

At the end of each day of observation, observers completed a set of reflective notes. Observers were asked to reflect upon the implementation of the day's activities. In addition, these notes provided observers with the opportunity to record any information or data gathered during their observation that did not belong on any of the other observation protocols. It was also a place for observers to document their experiences, biases, likes, and dislikes of a classroom observation experience. It allowed the observer to intentionally place any subjective comments they had regarding their observation so that they could avoid expressing these comments within the context of the objective fieldnotes taken during the observations.

Surveys

In order to gather information on the characteristics of summer school (intersession) students and the implementation of the program, teachers and the individuals responsible for overseeing the implementation of the program at the school-site were surveyed. Teacher surveys usually were completed near the culmination of the program. The surveys addressed these teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the standards-based intervention program during

the 2004-05 school year. In addition, surveys were conducted with the individuals responsible for overseeing summer school (intersession) regarding their perceptions of the implementation of the standards-based intervention program during the 2004-05 school year. These surveys were conducted during the fall of the 2005-06 school year.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data reduction and analysis for the evaluation consisted of developing a coding scheme for observations and coding of surveys. A trained group of research assistants worked closely with the project directors to code the observation fieldnotes. We examined the level of fidelity with which the Open Court curriculum was implemented. Curriculum fidelity was considered a proxy for instructional quality.

Curriculum fidelity, survey (teacher, administrator, and intervention coordinator), and assessment data were entered into SPSS. The study employed descriptive statistics and t-tests.

Findings

Summer School (Intersession) Characteristics

The following sections detail the characteristics of the program with respect to descriptions of why students were referred, students' level of attendance, and methods teachers used to identify and meet their students' needs.

Intervention Referral

The Standards-Based Promotion policy dictated that teachers were to send a letter informing parents that their child was at risk of being retained and that attendance in an intervention class was recommended. As part of this process, teachers were required to document the reason for the recommendation in the students' records. This type of information was an important means of determining whether students were being appropriately referred to intervention. We examined Districtwide Student Information System (SIS) summer school (intersession) data for type of recommendation (see Table 3). It is of interest to note that nearly 30% of students who were recommended to attend ELA intervention either had no recommendation reason noted or an invalid reason.

Table 3

Summer school (intersession) teacher recommendations for ELA intervention (Districtwide)

Recommendation	Number of students	Percent
All students attending off-track summer school (intersession)	52228	73
Missing or invalid recommendation	18979	27
Total	71207	100

Although it had been required in the past,¹³ Central Office staff did not require that schools make a distinction between those students who were mandated to attend summer school (intersession) and those who were not. We decided to look at the percentage of students who met program recommendation requirements. As stated previously, a reading mark of 2 or less during the 2nd reporting period or Periodic Writing Assessment (PWA) score of 2 or less meets the requirements of voluntary attendance in the program. Students who receive a reading mark of 1 during the final reporting period and a PWA score of 1 are mandated to attend the program. An examination of SIS data revealed that 47% of the students Districtwide (with language classification of EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5) who attended ELA summer school (intersession) met the criteria for voluntary attendance. The remaining 53% had a reading mark and/or PWA score of 3.

We were unable to conduct a similar analysis for ELD 1 – 4 students because information noting adequate ELD progress was not located in SIS, rather it was located in their intervention and ELD folders. None of the 17 schools in our sample had complete ELA summer school (intersession) data. Because school-site administrators presumably had access to all pertinent information upon which intervention recommendations were made, this finding does not mean that students were being misidentified for placement into intervention. However, it does indicate that the Central Office is still unable to accurately identify students who qualify for intervention throughout the District

Due to the inaccuracy or lack of data, there is no effective means for Central Office to verify that students who are eligible to receive intervention are in fact being provided

¹³ Memorandum No. BB-3, LAUSD, August 19, 2002.

additional support. In addition, if there was a time when a student’s qualification for placement into or lack of placement into intervention classes were to come into question, for some students, there would be no records in SIS to justify placement/non-placement.

Summer School (Intersession) Attendance

Rates of Attendance. Summer school (intersession) classes lasted 4 hours. A session of summer school (intersession) lasted 4 weeks with a maximum of 80 hours of available instruction. We were unable to determine the average number of hours students attended ELA summer school due to inconsistencies in SIS data.

Student Instructional Needs

Instructional Planning Data. In order to meet their students’ needs via individualized instruction, teachers must be aware of their students’ abilities. This presumes that the same teacher would teach students during the school year and summer school (intersession). However, only 28% of our sample teachers were also their students’ regular classroom instructor. Therefore, at the beginning of the session, many teachers needed an alternative source of student data other than their prior knowledge of the students. Student Online Assessment Reports (SOAR) data was a possible source of student information. Students’ reading and writing proficiency was assessed at the end of each unit of instruction (every six weeks during the regular instructional year). These results were placed in the SOAR system. As the purpose of SOAR data was to guide instruction, teachers were asked whether they used the data in that manner (see Table 4).

Table 4

Types of data used to inform instruction

Data Type	Number of Teachers (N = 37)	Percent
No data	17	46
Other data exclusively	9	24
SOAR and other data	8	22
SOAR data exclusively	3	8

Slightly more than half (54%) of teachers reported using some type of data to inform their instruction. More specifically, 22% of teachers used SOAR and other types of data (e.g., teacher observation, student work, OCR unit assessment, OCR comprehension assessment) to inform instruction, 8% used SOAR data exclusively, and 24% exclusively used data other than SOAR. Thus, it appeared that teachers have made a concerted effort to use available data resources such as SOAR to facilitate the modification of instruction according to their students' needs. This finding is positive because at-risk students who receive instruction that directly addresses their skills deficits benefit more than students who receive a more generalized form of instruction (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). The finding is moderated by the fact that 46% of teachers did not use data to inform their instruction. Therefore, students in these classrooms did not reap the benefits of data-informed instruction.

Intervention students' instructional needs. Teachers were asked to identify the top three skills in which their students needed the most assistance (see Table 5). Writing strategies (53%), reading comprehension (46%), writing conventions (46%), reading fluency (36%), and writing process (35%) were the skills deficits most frequently mentioned by teachers. The three most frequently cited sources of data for skill-needs identification were students' red intervention folders (23 of 52), teacher observation/class participation (22 of 52), and unspecified assessments (17 of 52). According to teachers, intervention students were lacking in all areas. The students displayed a generalized lack of reading and writing skills.

Table 5

ELA skills in which teachers indicated their students needed the most assistance

Skill	Number of Teachers (N = 55)	Percent
Writing strategies (e.g., content, voice)	29	53
Writing conventions (MUGS)	25	46
Reading comprehension	25	46
Reading fluency	20	36
Writing process	19	35
Vocabulary	17	31
Writing applications (genre)	5	9

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

Instructional Differentiation. The majority of teachers (43 of 55) stated that there were students with significantly differing skill needs in their classrooms. The three most frequently cited instructional techniques teachers used to meet the needs of all the students in their classrooms were small-group instruction (17 of 43), one-to-one instruction (16 of 43), and peer tutor/review/share (13 of 43). We actually observed 100% of teachers use small-group and/or one-to-one grouping strategies during instruction. As stated previously, the most effective student grouping during intervention is either small-group or one-to-one (Quatroche, 1999; Torgesen, 2004). Therefore, teachers who utilized these types of grouping strategies implemented one component of quality intervention instruction. Of course, the quality of instruction tempers the effectiveness of grouping strategies. Instructional quality will be discussed later in the report.

Summer School (Intersession) Uniformity

The following sections detail the level of uniformity across sample schools during the program with respect to the logistics of program implementation, professional development, curricula, classroom composition, assessments, and administrative support.

Summer School (Intersession) Implementation Challenges

The most commonly reported challenges involved information provided by the sending schools (see Table 6). Two administrators indicated that the sending schools did not provide enough information regarding their students, and three administrators reported that the information was not provided in a timely manner. One administrator commented, “The entire experience and program was a success when it came to our school. It would have been a 100% success if we did not have to deal with a sending school.” Other difficulties reported by administrators included a lack of communication regarding transportation and too much paperwork.

Table 6

Challenges to summer school (intersession) implementation

Topic	Number of Administrators (N = 7)	Percent
Sending schools did not provide enough information/ information not provided in a timely manner	5	71
Lack of communication regarding transportation	2	40
Excess paperwork	2	40

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not total 100%.

Professional Development

By and large, administrators are the overseers of the implementation of the Standards-Based Intervention Program at their schools. Their responsibilities should include ensuring that curricula used during intervention are uniform across teachers and are implemented by all teachers with fidelity. In order to perform these duties effectively, school administrators need to be provided with professional development pertaining to all aspects of the implementation of summer school (intersession) (e.g., record keeping guidelines, curricula, recommended program duration). All (16 of 16) individuals responsible for managing program implementation were principals or assistant principals. We asked school administrators whether they participated in any professional development related to the

implementation of summer school (intersession) during the 2004-05 school year. All administrators attended training during this time. As shown in Table 7, the majority of individuals responsible for managing the implementation of the program were trained on administrative duties (100%), the identification of students for the program (88%), and OCR Unit 6 implementation (81%). It is a key finding that only 31% of respondents mentioned receiving training on the modeling of comprehension strategies/skills. If administrators are expected to provide support to teachers, it is important that they be provided with training that pertains directly to meeting the needs of at-risk students.

Table 7

Topics addressed during administrator training

Topic	Number of Administrators (N = 16)	Percent
Administrative (e.g., paperwork, deadline, etc.)	16	100
Identification of students for summer school (intersession)	14	88
OCR Anthology Unit 6 implementation	13	81
OCR Intervention Guide implementation	9	56
Modeling of comprehension strategies/skills	5	31

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

All respondents felt that they were either well trained or very well trained to manage program implementation after attending training (see Table 8).

Table 8

Preparation to manage summer school (intersession) implementation

Level of Preparation	Number of Administrators and Intervention Coordinators (N = 16)	Percent
Very well	11	69
Well	5	31

Nearly all teachers (46 of 54) attended training.¹⁴ Almost all teachers (30 of 40) were trained either by their Literacy Coach exclusively or the Literacy Coach along with other

¹⁴ Teachers are only required to attend training if they have not previously attended summer school (intersession)-related training.

school-site personnel (e.g., Intervention Coordinator). The majority of teachers were trained on the use of the mandated curricula, OCR Anthology Unit 6 (88%) and Write Time for LAUSD Kids (92%) (see Table 9). As with the administrator, it is interesting to note that although professional development is supposed to include grouping strategies and scaffolding (e.g., modeling comprehension strategies/skills), no more than 29% of teachers reported that these topics were covered during the training they attended. One could postulate that since the explicit teaching of reading and writing strategies and skills is an essential component of reading and writing instruction, these topics should be addressed during professional development. Training needs to be focused on implementing curricula in such a manner as to ensure that at-risk students' needs are met.

Table 9

ELA Topics addressed during training

Topic	Number of Teachers (N = 48)	Percent
Write Time for LAUSD Kids	44	92
OCR Anthology Unit 6	42	88
OCR Intervention Guide	38	79
OCR ESL Supplement	18	38
Modeling of comprehension strategies/skills	14	29
Grouping strategies	11	23

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

Fifty-nine percent of teachers felt that they were either well prepared or very well prepared for teaching summer school (intersession) after attending training (see Table 10). Thirty-one percent felt their training only somewhat prepared them to teach summer school (intersession). Finally, 10% felt that their training left them either not very well prepared or not all prepared to teach summer school (intersession).

Table 10

How well summer school (intersession) training prepared teachers to teach summer school (intersession)

Level of Preparation	Number of Teachers (N = 48)	Percent
Very well	8	17
Well	20	42
Somewhat	15	31
Not very well	4	8
Not at all	1	2

Curricula

Teacher surveys revealed that their students displayed a generalized lack of reading and writing skills. As research has shown, the most effective reading instruction provides students with instruction on a) phonemics, b) decoding, c) fluency, d) vocabulary, and e) reading comprehension strategies. Effective writing instruction allows writers to engage in the writing process while learning the craft and skills of writing (Bromley, 2003). Although there is variation in the type of instruction a particular at-risk student needs, the curricula utilized should address the aforementioned skills in a comprehensive manner. OCR comprehensively addresses the instruction of reading and writing strategies and skills.

The teachers' responses concerning classroom curricula spoke to a high degree of uniformity across classrooms within summer school (intersession) (see Table 11). This finding supports a trend within the District towards the use of increasingly uniform curricula across teachers and schools during instruction. Central Office staff have explicitly outlined the ELA materials that are to be used during the program. School administrators need to continue in their efforts to ensure that the use of curricula in summer school (intersession) is uniform school-wide.

Table 11

ELA Curricula used during instruction

Curricula	Reported being used (N = 55)	
	Number of Teachers	Percent
OCR Anthology Unit 6	52	95
OCR Intervention Guide	50	91
Write Time for LAUSD Kids	47	86
OCR ESL Supplement	25	46

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

Classroom Composition

In an effort to guarantee the uniformity of the program across all classrooms in the District, the District provided schools with guidelines regarding the composition of intervention classes. Once student needs were identified, they were to be grouped in classes according to their needs (e.g., English Only students with similar instructional needs or English Language Learner students of the same ELD level). If a class could not be formed with students of the same needs and grade levels with a 20:1 student-to-teacher ratio then students of different grade levels but similar needs were to be grouped together.

Classroom composition determinants. Thirteen of 14 administrators were responsible for placing students in classes. We then asked these 13 respondents what factors determine how students were placed in a particular classroom. ELD level and reading marks were the most frequently cited factors in determining classroom composition (see Table 12).

Table 12

ELA-related determining factors of intervention classroom composition

Factor	Number of Administrators (N = 13)	Percent
ELD level	13	100
Reading Mark	12	92
EO/IFEP/RFEP designation	9	69
Writing assessment score	8	62

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

All of the determinants for classroom composition cited by administrators were

needs-based criteria as opposed to other criteria, such as classroom behavior. This finding is consistent with prior evaluations in which most, if not all, of the determinants coincided with District guidelines (Hodson, 2004a; Hodson, 2004b). A trend towards an increasingly high degree of fidelity to District mandates with respect to intervention recommendation has been evident over the past six years. When students are grouped in intervention classes according to their needs, then the students are well served. This is because students placed in classes with similarly situated students benefit since teachers are better able to tailor instruction to their needs as opposed to having to meet the needs of students of tremendously differing abilities (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). However, as is detailed below, with respect to ELD level, students were not always grouped in classes with students of similar needs.

Student English proficiency. The District recommends there be no more than two ELD levels in a classroom. Research has shown that greater numbers of ELD levels in a classroom generally is related to lower student achievement gains in reading, language, and math (Salazar, 2003). Classrooms that either were exclusively EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5 or ELD 1- 4 met District guidelines with respect to ELD levels in a classroom. In contrast, 64% of combination classrooms were composed of three or more ELD levels (see Table 13). One of the primary goals of intervention classes was to meet the needs of at-risk students via individualized or small-group instruction. If a classroom was comprised of students with drastically different ELD skill levels, teachers may have been hard pressed to effectively address their students' needs. Therefore, more than half of students were not well served because their classes were comprised of students of many differing ELD levels. It is not clear why students of vastly differing ELD levels would be placed in the same classroom. Perhaps it was a matter of constraints on funding and space. It is also possible that school-site administrators and/or teachers placed ELLs with ELD levels 1 – 4 in these classrooms because they felt the students' needs would be better met via the ELA/Math summer school rather than the ELD summer school program. This topic warrants further exploration.

Table 13

Number of ELD levels in summer school (intersession) classrooms

Classification	Number of ELD Levels	Number of Teachers (N)	Number of Teachers (n)	Percent
EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5	1 ELD level	31	31	100
ELD 1 – 4	2 ELD levels	1	1	100
Combo: EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5 & ELD 1 – 4	2 ELD levels	22	8	36
	3 ELD levels		7	32
	4 ELD levels		4	18
	5 ELD levels		3	14

Note: When considering the range of lowest to highest ELD levels, EO/REFP/IFEP was treated as being equivalent to ELD 5.

Student-to-teacher ratio. Slightly more than half (29 of 55) of classrooms adhered to the suggested 20:1 ratio. This finding is in sharp contrast to 2002-03, when 91% of classrooms adhered to the ratio. Seventeen of the 26 classrooms that did not adhere to the suggested ratio had ratios ranging from 21:1 to 25:1. The remaining nine classrooms had ratios ranging from 26:1 to 33:1. The low student-to-teacher ratio in effective intervention programs increases the likelihood of students being provided with the individualized attention needed to bring them nearer, if not completely up to grade level (Hiebert & Taylor, 2000). Even with a suggested classroom ratio of 20:1, teachers still need to utilize small-group instruction in order to intervene effectively with their students. The likelihood of providing effective intervention instruction decreases when schools do not adhere to student-to-teacher ratio guidelines.

Grades. If possible, classes were to be composed of students of the same grade level and skill needs. Classrooms were primarily comprised of a single grade level (48 of 54). Classrooms generally adhered to District guidelines with respect to grade level mixtures. The remaining six classrooms contained two grade levels. It is likely that the provision of

instruction in these classrooms was made more difficult due to the range in grade levels. Having students of the same grade level in a classroom is particularly important because the curriculum utilized during summer school (intersession) is grade level specific.

Assessments

The District emphasizes tailoring instruction to meet at-risk students’ needs. In order to know what skills students lack and whether their skills are improving, their needs must be assessed. There was a high degree of consistency across classrooms with respect to reading assessments utilized within summer school (intersession) (see Table 14). Eighty-nine percent used the OCR pre/posttests that were provided by the Central Office. Eighty percent of teachers used their own observations as a form of reading assessment. Overall, 95% of teachers used some type of OCR measurement to assess students in reading. Compared to 2002-03, the use of OCR assessments in general has more than doubled. This finding indicates a notable increase in the uniformity of the use of reading assessments in summer school (intersession).

Table 14

Instruments used to assess reading ability

Instrument	Number of Teachers (N = 54)	Percent
OCR pre/posttest (provided by the Central Office)	48	89
Teacher observation	43	80
OCR comprehension	18	33
OCR fluency	38	70
OCR unit test	9	17

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

Similar to the reading assessments, there was a high degree of consistency across classrooms in writing assessments used within summer school (intersession) (see Table 15). As with reading, the majority (79%) of teachers used their own observation to assess their students’ writing skills. Seventy-seven percent of teachers used the Write Time for LAUSD Kids prompt to assess their students’ writing.

Table 15

Instruments used to assess writing ability

Instrument	Number of Teachers (N = 53)	Percent
Teacher observation	42	79
Write Time for LAUSD Kids prompt	41	77
Performance assessment	30	57
Writing sample/portfolio	26	49
Teacher/school created rubric	14	26
Other (e.g., OCR Intervention prompt, OCR unit test)	8	15

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

There was a high degree of consistency in reading and writing assessments used within summer school (intersession). However, as with previous years, there was no uniform objective measurement of reading and writing progress that was not directly tied to either OCR or Write Time for LAUSD Kids. Hence, while individual teachers were able to assess their students' academic needs, there was no global means of measuring the effectiveness of the District's intervention programs. As a result, the District lacked an effective accountability system and means to measure students' academic progress.

Administrative Support

Nearly all teachers (47 of 55) received some type of administrative support regarding implementation of the program. Almost all teachers (31 of 38) received support from an administrator (e.g., principal, assistant principal). As shown in Table 16, most teachers received assistance with paperwork (78%) or curricula implementation (64%). Only 24% of teachers received support regarding the use of instructional techniques. Similar to professional development, few teachers were provided with support pertaining to the topics of grouping strategies and scaffolding (e.g., modeling comprehension strategies/skills). As summer school (intersession) is an intervention program targeted towards students who are below grade level in reading and/or writing it is important that teachers be provided with more support regarding the topic of effectively using intervention strategies.

Table 16

Types of ELA support received from administrators

Topic	Number of Teachers (N = 45)	Percent
Paperwork	35	78
Curricula implementation	29	64
Assessment	24	53
Use of data to inform instruction	14	31
Classroom management	11	24
Instructional techniques	11	24
Other (e.g., writer's workshop, modeling of effective classroom techniques)	9	20
Modeling comprehension strategies/skills	6	13
Grouping strategies	5	11

Note: Respondents could have provided multiple responses. Therefore, the percentages may not equal 100%.

Forty-nine percent of teachers felt that the level of administrative support they received met their needs (see Table 17). Thirty-eight percent of teachers felt that their needs were only somewhat met by administrators. Seven percent of teachers felt their administrative needs were not met at all. We also asked teachers in what ways, if any, the administrative support they received could have better met their needs. Of those who responded, 6 of 25 teachers stated that their needs would have been better met if the classes, materials, and/or red folders had been organized, complete, and/or available prior to the start of the program. Additionally, the following requests were made: a smaller student-to-teacher ratio (4 of 25) and more modeling by the coach and/or having a coach on site (4 of 25).

Table 17

Did the level of administrative support meet summer school (intersession) teachers' needs?

Needs Met	Number of Teachers (N = 55)	Percent
Yes	27	49
Somewhat	21	38
No	7	13

Curriculum Fidelity

The level of fidelity with which teachers implemented the Open Court Reading Unit 6, across grade levels, was examined. The following pages will detail how closely teachers followed the curriculum.

Open Court Reading Unit 6 Implementation

The Open Court Reading Unit 6 is comprised of three sections: *Preparing to Read*, *Reading and Responding (R&R)*, and *Integrating the Curriculum (ITC)*. Implementation of the R&R and ITC components of the curriculum are the foci of this evaluation.

Reading and Responding. The R&R section is comprised of three components: *Build Background/Preview and Prepare/Selection Vocabulary*, *Comprehension Strategies and Skills*, and *Discussing the Selection*. During the first section, the teacher is to use instructional techniques such as activating students' prior knowledge, providing background for the story, and introducing selection vocabulary. As seen in Table 18, teachers presented their students with story vocabulary prior to reading in the majority (87%) of observations. However, they infrequently engaged their students in activities such as activating prior knowledge (22%) and setting a purpose for reading (4%). Building a background for and previewing a story facilitates students' understanding of the story. Therefore, teachers should engage in these activities more often. Furthermore, Central Office staff may use this information to tailor teachers' professional development.

Table 18

Frequency of reading preparation elements observed

Activity	Number of Observations (N = 23)	
	Observed	Percent
Teacher previews selection vocabulary	20	87
Teacher has students browse	10	44
Teacher provides background information	8	35
Teacher has students identify clues, problems, and wonderings	6	26
Teacher activates prior knowledge	5	22
Concept/question board is used	2	9
Teacher has students set a purpose for reading	1	4

During the Comprehension Strategies section of R&R, teachers are to systematically and explicitly teach specific comprehension strategies and skills in conjunction with the reading of literature. A key component of systematic and explicit instruction is teacher modeling of the specified comprehension strategies and skills. Teachers rarely (3 of 25) informed students of which strategies they would be working on during the lesson. In the majority (64%) of observations, teachers modeled and/or prompted the student use of no more than 50% of the comprehension strategies suggested by the manual (see Table 19). On the other hand, when teachers were observed teaching comprehension skills, they used at least 51% of the skills suggested by the manual almost all (90%) of the time. However, when they attempted to model and/or prompt the use of strategies/skills, they did not do so with the thoroughness that the Instructional Guide (IG) suggested. Of 109 anthology prompts attempted by teachers, twenty-seven (25%) were implemented fully and eighty-two (75%) were partially implemented. As stated previously, at-risk students need to be explicitly taught reading strategies/skills if they are expected to use the strategies that proficient readers use. It is not expected that teachers read the suggested prompts verbatim. However, the learning goal of the lessons must be maintained. Two components of effective scaffolding of reading

comprehension strategies are teacher modeling of strategy use and student practice in the use of comprehension strategies. Students were not given enough support with respect to interventional reading instruction.

Table 19

Proportion of IG suggested reading comprehension strategies/skills attempted

	Strategies		Skills	
	Number of Observations (N = 25)		Number of Observations (N = 20)	
Proportion	n	Percent	n	Percent
25% or less	9	36	1	5
26% to 50%	7	28	1	5
51% to 75%	6	24	7	35
76% to 100%	3	12	11	55

Integrating the Curriculum. One component of the ITC section is *Writing*. This section provides students with additional practice in writing short pieces that incorporate the writing conventions they are already learning. Despite the fact that we observed the ITC section being taught 37 times, we never saw the Writing component being taught. Since each classroom was observed for two days, it is possible that the Writing section was taught but we did not have the opportunity to observe it being taught. However, the fact that we never saw this section being taught coupled with the findings of other evaluations in which the writing process was taught no more than half the time (Hodson & Howie, 2006; Program Evaluation and Research Branch, 2005) suggests that it was taught infrequently.

Instructional Fidelity. As has been found in regular classroom instruction, teachers implemented different components of the curriculum with varying degrees of fidelity (Fernández, 2006; Hodson & Howie, 2006; Slayton, Oliver, & Burley, 2003; Slayton, Hodson, Neuhaus, 2002). It appears that the building blocks of reading and writing instruction (e.g., phonemics and grammar) are emphasized to the detriment of reading comprehension strategies/skills and writing process instruction. The purpose of summer school (intersession) is to provide at-risk students with the additional support needed to enable them to perform closer to grade level. Although instruction in the fundamentals of

reading and writing is important, students need to be explicitly taught what techniques proficient readers and writers utilize if they are expected to perform at grade level standards.

Effectiveness of Summer School (Intersession)

Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

Perceptions. Thirty-three of 55 (60%) teachers felt that the program was somewhat effective at bringing students closer to grade level. Sixteen of 55 (29%) teachers felt the program was effective and three teachers (6%) felt the program was very effective. The remaining three teachers (6%) felt that the program was not effective at all at bringing students closer to grade level. Of the 48 teachers who responded, the most frequently stated reasons why the class brought students closer to grade level were additional opportunities to review/reinforce/practice skills and concepts such as reading comprehension (31%) and increased writing practice (29%). The opportunity to reinforce classroom instruction by giving students additional reading and writing opportunities is important because at-risk students need repeated exposure to reading comprehension strategies/skills and direct instruction in and practice of the writing process.

Suggestions for program improvement. Thirty-nine percent of teachers stated that they felt the program would be more effective at bringing students up to grade level if the classrooms had a smaller student-to-teacher ratio. This finding corresponds to the aforementioned research that has found that effective intervention is more intensive than regular classroom instruction. A smaller student-to-teacher ratio may achieve this intensiveness. However, due to budgetary constraints, it may not be feasible for classrooms to have a smaller student-to-teacher ratio than 20:1. In that case, teachers need to utilize small-group instruction in order to meet their students' needs.

Reading Assessment Outcomes

To measure whether students improved their reading skills through the class, we administered the RLI and the TOSWRF to a sample of students. The RLI measures students' sentence reading comprehension and vocabulary skills. The TOSWRF measures a student's ability to recognize printed words accurately and efficiently (reading fluency). A t-test was

conducted to determine if differences between the mean pretest and posttest RLI scores of students existed. No significant differences between the pretest ($M = 104.89$, $SD = 7.77$) and posttest ($M = 104.83$, $SD = 9.89$) means was found, $t(592) = .179$, $p = .86$ (two-tailed). Meaning that students' scores at the beginning (about 105 on average) were no different than their scores at the end of the class (about 105 on average). A t-test was also conducted to determine if differences between the mean pretest and posttest TOSWRF scores of students existed. Analysis revealed that the mean posttest score ($M = 101.13$, $SD = 12.84$) of students was significantly higher than the mean pretest score ($M = 94.94$, $SD = 11.42$), $t(811) = -19.13$, $p = .000$ (two-tailed). These findings suggest that although students' sentence comprehension skills did not appear to improve significantly over the course of instruction, students' reading fluency skills did improve.

Overall Perspective of Summer School (Intersession) Across Content Areas

This section provides an overview of the summer school (intersession) program by discussing the similarities and differences of the program in the two subject areas of language arts and math.

From the inception of the program in 1999 through the 2001-02 school year, only 2nd and 8th grade students were subject to the Standards-Based Promotion policy in ELA and offered additional support via summer school (intersession). Beginning in the 2002-03 school year, the Standards-Based Promotion policy was expanded from 2nd and 8th grade to 2nd through 5th and 8th grade. The policy also now required that students perform at grade level in mathematics in grades 4, 5, and 8. Overall, the ELA program, which has been in existence at the elementary level for three years longer than the math program, has become more coherent over time with respect to across-school uniformity in use of curricula and assessments. The math program, which is relatively new, is still undergoing a growth and development process, and thus may require additional time to achieve the same level of coherence. Our findings comparing and contrasting ELA and math are summarized below.

Summer School (Intersession) Characteristics

Analysis of SIS data revealed that 47% of ELA students (with language classification EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5) met the criteria for voluntary summer school (intersession)

attendance. On the other hand, only 51% of math students met the criteria for voluntary attendance. Considering budgetary and other resources (e.g. teachers, rooms) constraints, it is important to make sure that the appropriate students are enrolled in summer school (intersession) so that the program can serve those with the greatest level of need. As with previous years, there was a lack of intervention-related data in SIS. All of our 17 sample schools had ELA and/or math summer school (intersession) data that was incomplete or missing.

Students' Instructional Needs

ELA and math teachers indicated similar concerns with respect to meeting their students' needs. Teachers in both subject areas reported that the students in their classes were too heterogeneous with respect to their skill levels, which made it difficult to meet the needs of all students.

Teachers' use of data sources and assessments was more consistent in ELA than in math. This finding is not surprising, given that the math program began more recently. Our previous evaluations revealed a similar pattern for ELA in its earlier years. The use of consistent and uniform data sources and assessments provides a critical means for identifying student needs and accurately measuring student academic progress.

Summer School (Intersession) Uniformity

ELA classrooms generally contained more than the suggested number of ELD levels. This is consistent with what has been found in regular classrooms within the District. Most ELA classrooms adhered to the 20:1 student-to-teacher ratio but less than half of math classrooms adhered to the ratio. Teachers in both subjects felt that this ratio was too high. As stated earlier in this report, teachers must take the responsibility to use differentiated grouping strategies to help overcome this obstacle.

Curriculum Fidelity

Most math teachers and almost all ELA teachers used the prescribed curricula. Overall, teachers only partially implemented the curriculum in ELA and math. In both the ELA (OCR Anthology Unit 6) and math (Compass) curricula, the teacher was instructed to

begin the lesson by activating prior knowledge and preparing students for the upcoming lesson activities. In ELA, during the Reading & Responding (R&R) section, the Anthology instructed the teacher and students to read a story. We observed teachers activating prior learning, providing background for the story, and having students browse in fewer than half of the R&R observations. Sixty-seven percent of math teachers activated students' prior knowledge. Activating students' prior knowledge is an important part of instruction, especially for at-risk students. These students often need recurring instruction of key concepts, as well as a means for mentally connecting new ideas with what they already know.

Both the Anthology and Compass include activities that are designed to help students develop and hone their strategies and skills. In ELA, during the R&R section, the teacher should model reading strategies/skills. This should be followed by a discussion of the story and the strategies used during reading. During the reading strategies/skills section of the Anthology, the majority of the modeling and/or strategies/skills prompts attempted were not implemented with the thoroughness that the manual suggested. Typically, teachers did not define and/or explain the importance of strategies/skills, even when the manual suggested they do so. Students who are not reading at grade level need extensive explicit modeling of the use of reading strategies/skills and practice in the use of these strategies/skills.

The Compass math curriculum focuses heavily on improving students' problem-solving skills. In order to engage in problem-solving, students are required not only to use their procedural knowledge but also to understand when and why to use that procedure based on their conceptual understanding. According to NCTM (1999), problem-solving should pervade all math instruction. Our observations revealed that teachers completed slightly more procedural activities than problem-solving and conceptual. Eighty-five percent of teachers engaged their students in procedural activities, whereas 74% completed problem-solving activities and 74% of the conceptual activities were completed. This is consistent with recent research in regular LAUSD math classrooms revealing that most teachers put a heavy emphasis on computation (Newton, 2005; Hoffer, 2006).

Summer School (Intersession) Effectiveness

Almost all teachers perceived summer school (intersession) as being at least somewhat effective. The largest percentage of teachers felt that decreasing the student-to-teacher ratio would help improve program effectiveness. With respect to the effectiveness of ELA summer school (intersession), scores on the TOSWRF increased significantly from pre to post. However, there were no significant differences found between the pre and post scores of the RLI and MLI. Students' reading fluency skills improved over the course of instruction. Conversely, students' sentence comprehension and math skills did not improve. However, these findings must be viewed in the light of several caveats. First, there was very little evidence of teachers explicitly modeling reading comprehension strategies/skills and math problem-solving strategies. If students are not provided with direct instruction, it is unlikely that their skills will improve significantly. Second, it appears that the additional hours of instruction were not sufficient to produce a significant increase in achievement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Summer School (Intersession) Characteristics

Forty-seven percent of students (with language classification of EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5) who had marks and/or PWA scores in SIS met the criteria for voluntary attendance. The remaining 53% had a reading mark and/or PWA score of 3. One possible explanation for this finding is the following: in April, students were selected for recommendation to attend summer school (Track A Intersession). It is possible that some students who were performing below grade level at the time of recommendation improved by the end of the school year. Hence, some students may have been recommended to attend summer school (Track A intersession) even though their final mark ended up falling outside of the eligibility requirements. We were unable to determine the average number of hours students attended ELA summer school due to inconsistencies in SIS data. The Central Office has provided schools with guidelines for inputting intervention-related data in SIS. School-site administrators should provide staff with support that ensures proper documentation of student participation.

It is of interest to note that while examining SIS data, we discovered that none of the 17 schools in our sample had complete ELA summer school (intersession) data. Furthermore, whereas almost all EO/IFEP/RFEP/ELD5 students in the District had marks in SIS, almost all were missing PWA scores. The Central Office clearly defines what intervention data should be entered into SIS. School-site administrators need to insure that they are entering intervention data into SIS in an accurate and timely manner.

In order to maintain instructional accountability, the Standards-Based Intervention Program was designed so that all instructional decisions were data driven. Slightly more than half of teachers reported using some type of data to inform instruction. SOAR data was the most frequently cited source of information. Students who receive instruction that is tailored to their needs benefit more than students who receive a more generalized form of instruction. Teachers reported that they have made a concerted effort to utilize data to meet the particular needs of their students and they should continue to do so. However, 46% of teachers did not report using data to individualize instruction. These teachers should do so.

Writing strategies, reading comprehension, writing conventions, reading fluency, and process writing were the skills in which teachers stated their students needed the most assistance. Therefore, reading and writing instruction should have addressed: a) phonemic awareness, b) decoding, c) fluency, d) vocabulary development, e) reading comprehension strategies, and f) instruction of writing mechanics within the context of the writing process. Irrespective of the particular curricula that are used in summer school (intersession), the curricular content should be based upon the components of literacy intervention found to be most effective at increasing student skill levels. The OCR curriculum contains these instructional components and the curriculum is utilized during instruction. Therefore, if OCR is used in this manner and is implemented with high quality, the likelihood that students' reading and writing skills will improve is increased.

The majority of teachers noted that their classrooms contained students with significantly differing skill levels. One very important instructional technique that may be used to meet the individualized needs of the students is the use of grouping strategies such as small-group and one-to-one instruction. Accordingly, all teachers were observed using small-group and/or one-to-one grouping strategies. Teachers intensified instruction during summer

school (intersession) using the aforementioned instructional technique. However, the quality of instruction tempers the effectiveness of grouping strategies.

Summer School (Intersession) Uniformity

All administrators and nearly all teachers attended summer school (intersession)-related training during 2004-05. The percentage of administrators has nearly doubled since 2002-03. Administrators and teachers all reported that there was very little focus on scaffolding (e.g. the modeling of comprehension strategies and skills). If school administrators and intervention coordinators are to provide support to teachers, it is important that they be provided with training that pertains directly to meeting the needs of at-risk students. Furthermore, since the explicit teaching of strategies and skills is an essential component of reading and writing instruction, this topic needs to be covered also.

There was a high degree of uniformity across classrooms and schools of curricula used during instruction. Almost all teachers were observed using OCR and/or Write Time during ELA instruction. Central Office staff has provided schools with guidelines that are meant to ensure that the use of curricula during summer school (intersession) not only meets the needs of the students but is also as uniform as possible. Therefore, schools should continue their efforts to ensure that they adhere to these guidelines.

As in 2002-03, the composition of summer school (intersession) classrooms adhered to District guidelines with respect to student-to-teacher ratio and grade level. Conversely, as in 2002-03, in 2004-05, the composition of summer school (intersession) classrooms did not adhere to District guidelines with respect to the number of ELD levels per classroom. More than 60% of the classrooms that were comprised of ELLs and non-ELLs were composed of three or more ELD levels. One possible explanation for this may be that school-site administrators and/or teachers placed ELLs with ELD levels 1 – 4 in these classrooms because they felt the students' needs would be better met via the ELA/Math summer school rather than the ELD summer school program. Research has shown that greater numbers of ELD levels in a classroom was generally related to lower student achievement gains in reading, language, and math.

Administrators, intervention coordinators, and teachers asserted that both the student-to-teacher ratio and heterogeneity of skill levels within a classroom was problematic. School-site administrators need to arrange classrooms so that there are no more than two ELD levels in a classroom, if possible. If budgetary constraints are prohibitive of reducing the ratio and/or decreasing the heterogeneity of skills in classrooms, then perhaps schools should explore ways in which to gather resources for reducing the ratio. Moreover, as stated previously, teachers may use small-group instruction to meet their students' needs. Furthermore, using a system of accountability would help keep Central Office staff informed of the extent to which school-site administrators are forming classes with the appropriate number of ELD levels.

There was a high degree of consistency in reading and writing assessments used within summer school (intersession). Nevertheless, the District still lacks an objective and uniform measure of student progress that is not curriculum-based. In order to determine the effectiveness of the program, reading and writing assessments that are reliable, valid, and objective must be utilized in both regular and intervention classrooms. These assessments should measure students' progress in the development of grade level literacy skills. The assessment results should then be placed into SIS in order to facilitate the tracking of student progress over time. In addition, the assessment results may be used in the identification of students who may be at risk of not performing at grade level. As stated previously, good readers read fluently, possess sufficient vocabulary to understand what they are reading, and use comprehension strategies. Therefore, it would be helpful if the District used assessments that would enable them to track students' progress in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Torgesen (2002) recommends that students in first through third grade be assessed at least three times a year in order to identify elementary students who may be at risk of having reading difficulties accurately. Once identified, said students could be provided with the appropriate intervention.

Nearly all teachers received some type of administrative support regarding the implementation of summer school (intersession). In most instances, this support was provided by an administrator. Forty-nine percent of teachers felt the support they received met their needs. According to teachers, administrators provided assistance with paperwork

and curricula implementation with the greatest frequency. Fewer than thirty percent received support pertaining to the topics of grouping strategies and scaffolding. Summer school (intersession) is an intervention program targeted towards students who are performing below grade level standards in reading, writing, or mathematics. Therefore, teachers need to be provided with more support regarding the topic of using intervention strategies effectively.

Curriculum Fidelity

As has been found in previous studies of regular classroom instruction, teachers implemented the curriculum during summer school (intersession) with a low level of fidelity. Despite the fact that the manual prompted them to do so, the majority of teachers implemented no more than 50% of the literacy strategies prompts. Conversely, the majority of teachers implemented 50 – 100% of the literacy skills prompts. However, this finding is tempered by the fact that of 109 prompts attempted, only 27 were implemented fully. In classrooms, strategies and skills should be taught explicitly and often. Student use of strategies should be encouraged and scaffolded until they are able to use these strategies on their own. At-risk students need to be provided with the support and quality of instruction that will enable them to perform at grade level standards and eventually pass the high school proficiency exam. Teachers need to be provided with professional development that provides them a rationale for providing direct literacy instruction. Studies have shown that enabling teachers to see how the use of research-based instructional strategies benefits their students increases the likelihood that the use of such strategies will be sustained (Gersten, Chard, & Baker, 2000). Furthermore, as stated previously, professional development should include instruction on scaffolding instruction and encouraging student inquiry.

Effectiveness of Summer School (Intersession)

T-test analysis revealed that there were no statistically or educationally significant pre-posttest differences in the sentence comprehension skills of students who attended summer school (intersession). These findings must be viewed in the light of several caveats. First, instruction during summer school (intersession) was of uniformly low quality. There was moderate evidence of teachers explicitly modeling reading comprehension

strategies/skills. If students are not provided with direct literacy instruction, it is unlikely that their skills will improve significantly. Second, research has shown that increased learning time is positively related to achievement. However, it appears that the hours of additional instruction did not result in a significant increase in achievement (Fusaro, 1997). As stated previously, teachers need to be provided with professional development pertaining to explicit literacy instruction. Furthermore, students need to be provided with as many opportunities to be exposed to quality instruction as is possible (e.g., having multiple sessions of ELP that a student may attend throughout the year, depending on data indicators of progress towards grade level standards with additional support provided during the summer, if necessary). It is important to reiterate that the instructional quality in summer school (intersession) classrooms is reflective of instruction in the regular classroom during the school year. Therefore, unless a transformation of instruction occurs Districtwide, it is unlikely that instructional quality in summer school (intersession) will change significantly.

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