



**ALBUQUERQUE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

A Formative Evaluation of the K-3 Plus Program

2007-2008

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EVALUATION REPORT

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A FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF THE K-3 PLUS PROGRAM

Introduction

Since the 2003-04 School Year (SY), the Albuquerque Public Schools district has participated in the K-3 Plus (originally Kindergarten Plus) Program. The goal of K-3 Plus is to “narrow the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and other students and increase cognitive skills [that] lead to higher test scores” (2007 NM House Bill 198). The program is targeted to schools with at least 85% of students eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. The program was originally funded through 2003 HB 61, and has now become permanent through 2008 HB 3, the Education Appropriation Act.

In APS, one Kindergarten classroom in each of four schools participated during the program’s first three years. Originally, Kindergarten Plus added a total of 40 extra school days, with approximately 25 days added before the Kindergarten school year and approximately fifteen days added at the end. An evaluation of the first three years of the program indicated that students participating in Kindergarten Plus performed better on standardized tests of mathematics, reading and social skills throughout the Kindergarten year. Teachers experienced a high amount of latitude regarding how to spend their time. They reported high satisfaction with the program (Carrillo, 2007)¹. With an increase in funding (2006 HB 43) the program expanded in Albuquerque to eight classrooms in five schools in the 2006-07 SY.

Recently, 2007 HB 198 expanded and modified the program in three major ways. First, the program can be used for 1st-3rd grade classrooms as well as Kindergarten. Second, the program provides for about 25 extra days rather than 40, ideally all completed before the start of the regular school year. Finally, the bill requires teachers to administer the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment to all participating students three times a year. The NM Public Education Department currently oversees the program in eighteen districts across the state.

In Albuquerque, sixteen schools are participating in K-3 Plus in the 2007-08 SY, including: Dolores Gonzales, Hawthorne, Los Padillas, Mountain View, and Valle Vista (all of whom had participated previously in the Kindergarten Plus program) as well as Alamosa, Duranes, Edward Gonzales, Emerson, Eubank, Kirtland, Lavaland, La Luz, La Mesa, Reginald Chavez, and Whittier. The program includes 22 Kindergarten classrooms, eighteen 1st grade classrooms, fourteen 2nd grade Classrooms, one 1st-2nd grade combination class, and fourteen 3rd grade classrooms. A total of 983 students participate: 333 Kindergartners, 237 1st graders, 207 2nd graders, and 205 3rd graders.

¹ Carrillo, Nancy. 2007. “The Impact of Kindergarten Plus: Summative and Formative Evaluation 2003-2006.” Research, Development and Accountability, Albuquerque Public Schools: Albuquerque, NM.

Of the sixteen schools, six completed all 25 days before the start of the regular school year. One year-round school completed three weeks before the regular school year, and will complete the remaining two weeks during the fall and spring breaks. The remaining nine schools will complete their Plus days after the end of the regular school year.

Two evaluation reports will be written to assess K-3 Plus for the 2007-08 SY. This document is the first report. The intended purpose of this evaluation report is for program improvement (i.e. a formative evaluation). It addresses four evaluation questions:

1. Is the K-3 Plus program reaching students in need of extra instruction?
2. How do teachers utilize the extra time that the K-3 Plus program provides?
3. What are most effective techniques for recruiting students to capacity?
4. What are teachers' perspectives of the strengths and benefits of the K-3 Plus program?
What are the areas in need of improvement?

The second evaluation report will answer these evaluation questions:

1. What factors are associated with more successful K-3 Plus program sites?
2. Does the K-3 Plus program encourage families to remain in the same school?
3. How do academic outcomes compare for K-3 Plus students and their peers?
 - a. Does K-3 Plus reduce summer loss of reading and math skills?
 - b. Does any advantage of K-3 Plus persist to the middle of the school year?
 - c. Does any advantage of K-3 Plus persist to the end of the school year?

Method

Student Information

Student Sample. We developed a quantitative, student-level data set comprised of all students in grades and schools served by K-3 Plus. The treatment group consists of the 983 students who participated in K-3 Plus for any length of time. The comparison group consists of the 3,671 students enrolled in K-3 Plus schools and grades during the spring of the 2006-07 SY.

Demographic variables. Four demographic variables known to affect academic outcomes are included in this analysis: gender, Special Education status (not including gifted), ELL status (English Language Learner), and underperforming minority (Hispanic, Native American or Black).² Each is a binomial measure.

Assessment variables. No spring 2007 assessment information is available for Kindergarten students. For 1st grade students, we collected spring 2007 Kindergarten Developmental Progress Report (KDPR) math, reading, and social skills scores as well as Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) information in English and Spanish. For 2nd and 3rd grade students, we collected the spring 2007 Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and EDEL

² Socio-economic level is another demographic variable known to effect academic achievement. In APS, our best indicator of socio-economic level is participation in the Free/Reduced Price Lunch Program (FRLP). Nearly all students in these schools qualify for FRLP. Since FRLP is a constant in this dataset, we cannot analyze its impact.

Evaluación Del Desarrollo De La Lectura (EDEL) information. For both DRA and EDEL, instructional reading levels are recoded to an ordinal scale ranging from 0 to 17. (Schools use a variety of different math assessments; therefore we elected not to include math information for grades 2 and 3.)

K-3 Plus Teacher Information

Teacher survey. We asked all K-3 Plus teachers to complete the teacher survey through an email message. The survey could be returned through e-mail or completed through inter-office mail or by telephone. Most teachers e-mailed their survey responses; most submitted their responses during the months of October and November following the summer portion of K-3 Plus.

The survey asks questions about how teachers spent their time during K-3 Plus days, how they recruited participations, differences between their instruction during K-3 Plus days and the regular school year, and their ideas about how the program can be improved. Appendix A is a copy of the survey instrument.

Sample. Twenty-eight teachers (40%) completed the survey, including eight Kindergarten teachers, seven 1st grade teachers, seven 2nd grade teachers, and six 3rd grade teachers. Thirteen of the sixteen participating schools are represented by at least one teacher. One complication was the evaluators' inability to obtain the e-mail addresses of teachers in some schools.

Results

1. Is the K-3 Plus program reaching students in need of extra instruction?

Often an important evaluation question is whether an intervention reaches its target beneficiaries, particularly for voluntary programs such as K-3 Plus. District personnel expressed concern that families whose children who already performed well in school might choose to participate in K-3 Plus disproportionately over families with struggling students. If true, K-3 Plus might serve to widen the achievement gap between groups of students, rather than its intended purpose of narrowing the gap. In addition, if K-3 Plus students happen to be better prepared for school *a priori*, then any differences between the groups in later assessments may not be due to the program.

For Kindergarten students, no *a priori* academic achievement information is available. Therefore, the best we can do to determine whether K-3 Plus reaches kindergarteners in need of extra instruction is compare demographic information that we know influences academic outcomes. Each of the four demographic variables examined – ethnicity, gender, special education status, and ELL status – are very similar between kindergarten K-3 Plus participants and the comparison group, with no statistically significant differences among them. Similar to previous years, both groups are high in their percentage of underperforming minority students (almost 90%) and ELL students (60%).

However, in grades 1, 2 and 3, there are some demographic differences between K-3 Plus participants and their peers. (See Table 1). In each grade, a greater percentage of K-3 Plus

students are ELL students compared to the comparison group, a difference of between 8 and 12 percentage points. Among 2nd graders, slightly more K-3 Plus students than comparison group students are members of an underperforming minority group. Among 1st graders, the difference in the percentage of students that are female between the two groups approaches statistical significance. With the exception of the gender difference among 1st graders, all these differences suggest K-3 Plus participants are in need of more instruction.

Table 1: Demographic Differences, 2007-08: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Grade Students

Demographic Variable	K-3 Plus	Comparison	Difference	T
1st Grade				
ELL student	58% (237)	46% (939)	-12	3.19**
Female	52% (235)	45% (920)	-7	1.72 [†]
2nd Grade				
ELL student	62% (207)	54% (966)	-8	2.02*
Underperforming Minority	94% (192)	90% (851)	-4	2.01*
3rd Grade				
ELL student	64% (205)	54% (1,016)	-10	2.56*

N's indicated in parentheses. [†]: p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

For 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders, we have achievement information to assess the question more accurately. Table 2 shows a series of t-tests to determine whether K-3 Plus students had higher assessment scores than their peer groups in the spring of 2006-07. If K-3 Plus students had higher scores before the program began, the program would not seem to be reaching its intended audience. However, much of the evidence suggests that students participating in K-3 Plus are indeed behind their peers in academic achievement.

We have the most assessment information available for 1st grade students. As Kindergartners in 2006-07, these students were assessed using the KDPR and DIBELS. This information suggests that among students assessed in English, K-3 Plus and comparison group students performed about equally well in the spring of their Kindergarten year on both assessments. Among students assessed in Spanish, comparison group students performed statistically significantly better in Reading, Math, and Social skills on the KDPR. Thus, among 1st graders assessed in English, K-3 Plus at least does not seem to attract students better academically prepared than their peers; the two groups are largely alike. Among 1st graders assessed in Spanish, the program attracts students who are less academically prepared than their peers.

For 2nd grade students, comparison group students performed better than K-3 Plus participants both on the English DRA assessment and its Spanish counterpart, EDEL. In English, comparison group students' independent reading level was approximately one level higher than K-3 Plus students. In Spanish, comparison group students' independent reading level was approximately one and a half levels higher than K-3 Plus students. Though the differences in the percentage of students that are proficient in both English and Spanish seem substantive, 6 and 12 percentage points respectively, they are not statistically significant. Again, K-3 Plus seems to be serving students who are struggling compared to their peers.

The same pattern emerges among 3rd graders. In the previous spring, comparison groups outperformed K-3 Plus participants in English (by about 1 reading level) and Spanish (by about 2 and a half reading levels). The percentages of comparison group students who are proficient in reading are 7 and 12 percentage points higher in English and Spanish, respectively. This difference is statistically significantly different for English.

Table 2: Assessment Scores from Spring 2007: 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Grade Students

Assessment	K-3 Plus	Comparison	Difference	T
1st Grade				
<i>English</i>				
KDPR: Reading	37.2 (172)	36.9 (515)	.7	.41
KDPR: Math	33.7 (172)	33.5 (515)	.1	.69
KDPR: Social	14.0 (172)	13.9 (515)	.1	.59
DIBELS: Letter-naming	43.1 (159)	41.1 (569)	2.0	1.2
DIBELS: Phoneme Segmentation	38.0 (159)	35.9 (569)	2.1	1.2
<i>Spanish</i>				
KDPR: Reading	31.6 (56)	35.7 (153)	-4.1	3.43**
KDPR: Math	30.6 (56)	33.2 (153)	-2.6	2.70**
KDPR: Social	12.4 (56)	13.7 (153)	-1.3	3.01**
IDEL: Letter-naming	29.6 (28)	31.3 (153)	-1.7	.48
IDEL: Phoneme Segmentation	35.5 (28)	39.4 (153)	-3.9	.81
2nd Grade				
<i>English</i>				
DRA – Independent Reading Level	6.3 (203)	7.1 (821)	-.8	2.88**
DRA - % Proficient	24% (182)	29% (696)	-5	1.46
<i>Spanish</i>				
EDEL – Independent Reading Level	5.4 (40)	6.9 (177)	-1.5	2.58*
EDEL - % Proficient	15% (40)	27% (177)	-12	1.75 [†]
3rd Grade				
<i>English</i>				
DRA – Independent Reading Level	10.2 (191)	11.4 (875)	-1.2	3.32**
DRA - % Proficient	30% (178)	38% (794)	-8	2.08*
<i>Spanish</i>				
EDEL – Independent Reading Level	8.8 (37)	11.6 (123)	-2.8	3.75***
EDEL - % Proficient	24% (37)	37% (123)	-12	1.46

N's indicated in parentheses. [†]: p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Overall, these data suggest K-3 Plus does reach students in need of extra instruction.³ Teacher survey information does suggest that some schools did target struggling students.

³ We repeated these analyses school by school. Only in two cases did K-3 Plus students earn statistically significantly higher test scores than their peers the previous spring – Hawthorne and Lavaland 1st graders. These differences in scores are not substantively important, and appear to be due to chance – in neither school does this pattern hold for other grades.

2nd Gr: Teachers... gave a list to the office of children they felt would benefit from K-3 Plus.

3rd Gr: Parents were reminded of K-3+ as a part of their child's AIP.

However, these practices are not widely reported; and all schools use strategies designed to reach as many students as possible. Families seem to understand K-3 Plus as an opportunity for struggling children.

2. How do teachers utilize the extra time that the K-3 Plus program provides?

Subjects. We asked teachers to provide a weekly schedule for their K-3 Plus days. Not surprisingly, the largest part of the week was spent on Language Arts instruction, on average thirteen hours per week, though the range is wide. (See Table 3.) Teachers spend on average about 6½ hours on Math instruction. The time spent on Language Arts is fairly consistent across grade levels, while the time spent on Math increases with grade level from about four hours in Kindergarten to 8½ hours in 3rd Grade.

Table 3: Time Spent Weekly on Language Arts and Math by Grade

	Language Arts		Math	
	Average	Range	Average	Range
Kindergarten (n=8)	11:40	7:05-16:45	4:10	2:05-6:45
1 st Grade (n=7)	12:55	10:35-16:15	6:10	4:35-9:10
2 nd Grade (n=6)	14:40	10:50-18:20	7:30	5:00 – 10:00
3 rd Grade (n=6)	13:30	6:40-23:20	8:30	5:55-11:20
<i>All teachers (n=27)</i>	<i>13:00</i>	<i>6:40-23:20</i>	<i>6:25</i>	<i>2:05-11:20</i>

Some teachers differentiated the amount of time they focused on reading and on writing. (See Table 4). When specific time blocks for writing are reported, they increase steadily by grade level from an average of 50 minutes in Kindergarten to about 4½ hours for 3rd grade.

Table 4: Time Spent Weekly on Writing by Grade

	Writing	
	Average	Range
Kindergarten (n=4)	:50	:05-2:55
1 st Grade (n=5)	2:40	:05-5:00
2 nd Grade (n=4)	2:55	2:00-3:45
3 rd Grade (n=3)	4:35	2:30-7:30
<i>All teachers (n=16)</i>	<i>2:35</i>	<i>:05-7:30</i>

Many teachers note that they are able to devote particular attention to Social Studies and Science during K-3 Plus, though only about half of teachers include the subjects in their schedule. (See Table 5.) More teachers report teaching Science than Social Studies, and devote more time to Science than Social Studies. The time spent in Science tends to increase with grade level, from an average of under two hours a week for Kindergartners to more than five hours for 3rd Graders. In Social Studies, the time spent is quite similar, just under or just over two hours a week,

regardless of grade level. These differences are perhaps not surprising considering NCLB requirements for Science assessment and accountability.

Table 5: Time Spent Weekly on Social Studies and Science by Grade

Social Studies			Science		
	Avg.	Range		Avg.	Range
Kinder (n=5)	1:40	:25-2:55	Kinder (n=5)	1:45	:25-3:45
1 st Grade (n=5)	1:50	1:15-3:45	1 st Grade (n=6)	2:25	1:15-3:20
2 nd Grade (n=2)	2:20	1:55-2:40	2 nd Grade (n=3)	2:10	1:55-2:40
3 rd Grade (n=1)	1:40	n/a	3 rd Grade (n=2)	5:15	1:40-8:45
<i>All teachers (n=13)</i>	<i>1:50</i>		<i>All teachers (n=16)</i>	<i>2:30</i>	

Finally, the elected classes that are offered differ greatly between schools and teachers. As seen in Table 6, the most common elective classes are art (52% of teachers reporting), P.E (33%) and music (30%). One teacher reports devoting some time each week to drama and one to library skills.

Table 6: Number and Percentages of Teachers Reporting Elective Classes

	P.E.	Music	Art	Drama	Library
Kindergarten (n=8)	1 (12%)	4 (50%)	3 (36%)	1 (12%)	0 (0%)
1 st Grade (n=7)	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	6 (86%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2 nd Grade (n=6)	2 (33%)	1 (16%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
3 rd Grade (n=6)	2 (33%)	1 (16%)	2 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (16%)
<i>All teachers (n=27)</i>	<i>9 (33%)</i>	<i>8 (30%)</i>	<i>14 (52%)</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>	<i>1 (4%)</i>

More instructional time

While we did not collect comparative data on the time spent on academic subjects and elected classes during the school year, many teachers' comments suggest that almost universally, teachers report feeling they have more instructional time during K-3 Plus days compared with regular school days. They attribute the differences to fewer pull-out programs and elective classes, smaller class sizes, and the near absence of other teacher responsibilities, such as goal team meetings. With extra time, they might adjust their pace or cover particular units that were not covered the previous year. Some teachers added more instructional time to language arts and math, and/or added other subjects to their repertoire, such as science or social studies.

K: *I was able to go slower in reading and math over the summer. This year's kids seem very low in comparison to other years. During the school year, all teachers have to teach at the same pace, all have to finish Units at the same time, so there is less instruction than during K-3 Plus.*

K: *I was able to teach more science and social studies. I had more time to reach literacy and math because there were fewer interruptions.*

K: *There was no collaboration time, and so there was more instructional time in reading and math. I spent more time on one-to-one tutoring.*

K: *Because we began earlier I am going to be able to finish the entire kindergarten curriculum. Harcourt has more weeks in it than we have in our school year... my students have greatly benefited from this program. They had a focused teacher for 25 days. I was not split or divided between goal teams, committees, and other mandated work.*

1st Gr: *The K-3 Plus program allowed me the opportunity to spend more instructional time with the students because we did not have students attending the regular elective classes (i.e. P.E., Library, Music, and Counseling). They only had one elective, Art Class.*

2nd Gr: *During the K-3 Plus program our school followed the same guidelines and curriculum as the regular school year. The only difference was that we did not have collaboration time with grade level or staff meetings.... I had only 12 students out of 20 which made a big difference for we were able to accomplish so much more.*

2nd Gr: *I used an Investigations unit from first grade that they had not gotten to during the year.*

3rd Gr: *I was able to complete the Every Day math program for 2nd grade that 2nd grade teachers were unable to get to.*

More experiential learning, teacher-created lessons and use of different materials

Most teachers report using the same or similar materials during K-3 Plus days as during the regular school year. On the other hand, a sizeable minority of teachers described enjoying the ability to create lessons, use materials other than what are used during the regular school year, and increase experiential learning. And many teachers that had not done as much experiential learning declared they would next time around. Just as some teachers appreciated the opportunity to teach a more flexible curriculum, noted above, several other teachers, when asked what they might change, report they hope to incorporate more experiential learning, field trips, and the like next time.

K: *I would hope to have more money for field trips. We went to zoo. I would like to do 2-3 other activities because students usually don't have much opportunity. For parents too.*

1st Gr: *I will try to schedule more time for developmental play. I will also have time to plan better, since I would know a head of time what will be going on.*

1st Gr: *I felt more freedom to create my own lessons based on teacher observation of students' needs. I used the same literacy and math time blocks, but did not feel the pressure to be on a certain lesson in the math program since we didn't start the Investigations unit until the beginning of school in August.*

1st Gr: *After the start of the school year, we were required to start to use our core reading and math programs. [During K-3 Plus,] I used activities that I did in the past years at the beginning of the year.*

2nd Gr: *During the K-3+ program I was able to assess and then teach what I felt was needed for student growth. I used some formal and a lot of informal assessment to guide my instruction. I came up with my own lessons to meet the needs of the children using “best practices” whenever possible. I was trying to improve on their foundation of learning and where I saw gaps, I developed lessons to meet those needs. I also attempted to offer readiness lessons on future 2nd grade concepts that I knew they would be expected to learn. Our day was less stressful and I felt more productive because I was able to address the instructional needs of the children with lessons I developed around their needs. I wasn’t expecting them to learn something because it was in the curriculum but because it was their next step in developing a better foundation when addressing the Second Grade curriculum...During the K-3 Plus program, we moved at a slower pace and moved on when most of the children had the concept or I would reteach concepts before we moved on... I also tried to make the days fun since they were giving up their summer time. I had high expectations but I would bring in some fun hands on activities. For example, I brought in a watermelon for a lesson on adjectives/describing words in their writing. They brainstormed words to describe the watermelon as a class before we cut it open. We then did “Watermelon Math” when cutting the watermelon. We talked about circumference, length, fractions and estimation of seeds in their slices. We then used calculators to count all the seeds. We again came up with describing words when tasting/eating the watermelon. Then we did an Art lesson where we made sponge watermelon paintings with glued on watermelon seeds. Finally, they wrote about their watermelon experience. They loved it and seemed to learn a lot.*

2nd Gr: *I also would like to have a theme supported by a field trip and some activities that possibly make it more “special” to the children and hands on. Our students don’t get to see many things or have some of those special experiences so money to help pay for 1 – 2 field trips would be extremely be that are so valuable, in my opinion. Also, it would make the program more attractive to some. We didn’t have the money/planning time for the field trips but we did plan and implement a Play Day. Many parents came out for this. It would be nice if we had more ways to get more parents involved.*

2nd Gr: *More of a flexible curriculum if possible, hey its summer and students need to be having fun...but can still be learning...*

3rd Gr: *I would like to incorporate more hands on science activities.*

3rd Gr: *I would follow the same general program. I would incorporate more "hands-on" activities (with specific academic goals).*

3rd Gr: *During K-3 Plus, I focused on Reading, Writing, and Math. I was able to use my own supplemental materials to teach these subjects. My students were starting 3rd grade and I used the extra 3½ weeks to review 2nd grade material. At the start of the regular school year, I passed out the text books and began the 3rd grade curriculum. (I did not want to get into the text books sooner because the 3rd grade team plans together during the regular school year and my team members did not do K-3 Plus).*

More one-on-one instruction and differentiated instruction

Finally, many teachers report being able to increase one-on-one and differentiated instruction due to increased time and reduced class sizes.

K: *I spent more time on one-to-one tutoring.*

1st Gr: *I used the same schedule and same instructional activities and methods for K-3 Plus and for the regular school year. The only difference was I had less students during K-3 Plus and was able to spend more time with individual students and small groups during this time.*

1st Gr: *The K-3 Plus Program allowed me to organize my curriculum, assess the students, and differentiate instruction to better meet the needs of my students. My attention and energy wasn't being diverted towards beginning of the year responsibilities such as attending orientations, curriculum overviews, schedule changes, etc. The focus was on assessing the students and providing instruction. Overall, I was better prepared as a teacher to meet their academic needs. I especially enjoyed the number of students I was able to instruct. Fourteen students was an ideal number because it allowed me the opportunity to provide more one-on-one instruction.*

2nd Gr: *I definitely had more time for one-one instruction and small group work was greatly improved simply due to the student: teacher ratio. My experience was a completely different one from the regular school year in everything from time to students.*

3rd Gr: *I used Harcourt for reading, which is what we use during the regular school year, but because I had a smaller class size and more freedom and time, I was able to differentiate to a greater degree. In math I used Everyday Math, which is also what we use during the regular school year, but I was able to focus more on the games, systems, and readiness activities. With a smaller class size I was able to be more creative and bring in a more diversified approach. We were more focused, and able to tackle higher-level thinking problems in both math and reading.*

3. What are most effective techniques for recruiting students to capacity?

Of the 16 K-3 Plus schools, 15 schools served Kindergarten students, and 12 schools served students in each of grades 1, 2, and 3. Table 6 shows the approximate percentage of students in each grade that participated in K-3 Plus. On average, about one in five students enrolled in K-3 Plus. The percentage of students served may vary from school to school for a variety of reasons. First, a school's capacity depends on teachers' availability. Second, after Kindergarten, some families have the option of placing their students in summer school. Since summer school is offered in some, but not all, K-3 Plus locations, some schools may be more affected by the alternative summer school program than others. Third, the percentages reported below reflect enrollment in the program. Some schools witnessed high drop-out rates or absentee rates, but because evaluators were not able to collect absentee information from most schools, attendance information is not reported.

Table 6: Percentage of Students Participating in K-3 Plus

	Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade
Total	24%	20%	20%	19%
Alamosa	26%	26%	22%	8%
Dolores Gonzales	33%			
Duranés	20%		29%	38%
Emerson	31%	38%	33%	40%
Eubank	17%	18%	15%	16%
Edward Gonzales	17%	17%	11%	9%
Hawthorne	19%	22%	21%	17%
Kirtland	22%			
La Laz	17%	19%	15%	18%
La Mesa	11%			
Lavaland	23%	29%	14%	14%
Los Padillas	67%	32%	21%	17%
Mountain View		42%	40%	29%
Reginald Chavez	37%	30%	33%	29%
Valle Vista	43%	30%	32%	41%
Whittier	20%	15%		

For the most part, schools and often teachers were responsible for recruiting students this year. Five schools stand out as enrolling particularly high percentages of students into K-3 Plus: Emerson, Los Padillas, Mountain View, Reginald Chavez, and Valle Vista Elementaries. Three of these schools offered K-Plus in the past (Los Padillas, Mountain View, and Valle Vista), and likely benefited from their communities' previous awareness of and experience with the program.

Most schools used a variety of advertising techniques. Teachers from most schools reported that the principal sent newsletters home and that either the K-3 Plus teachers or school administrative staff called families of pre-registered students with information about the program. Some teachers reported targeting particular families with phone calls or notes sent home. Some schools, including ones with high enrollment, posted messages on their marquee and advertised in neighborhood stores, churches, and pre-schools, as well as within the school itself. Other reported strategies include: changing school enrollment to a spring date so that families can learn about K-3 Plus ahead of time, requesting families express interest in the spring, and, in the case of one school, making door-to-door contacts.

Gauging the number of desired students is a difficult choice requiring a trade-off. As we have seen, teachers feel that a small class size is a key factor in K-3 Plus' success since it allows more time for more one-on-one and differentiated instruction. But teachers also feel that the program is so beneficial, the more students that can participate, the better. In addition, full classrooms would negate the need to add more students to the classroom at the beginning of the regular school year. As shall be discussed below, the beginning of the year can be a difficult transition.

K: *[The district could help with] recruiting – hope we could have more children involved. More kids, more teachers. More field trips. More enrollment = more benefit to schools.*

1st Gr: *[The district could] try to get parents to agree to participate as early as possible.*

2nd Gr: *We definitely need more recruitment opportunities earlier in the year. Informational meetings at schools would help dispel the “it’s just summer school” myth.*

3rd Gr: *If we could recruit more students, allowing for more than one class per grade level, the quiet hard-working tone may continue once the regular school year begins. K-3+ was very successful for the third grade students I worked with.*

3rd Gr: *Make sure that teachers have a full class load, and/or that they get to keep the students they taught over the summer. I didn’t get to keep all of mine. Decide on a curriculum plan instead of asking us to re-teach the same chapters when regular school begins.*

On the other hand:

K: *[The district could] limit the amount of students that are added to plus classes.*

1st Gr: *For first grade, the students coming from Kinder are still somewhat immature. During this summer program, the first grade classes should be under 10 students.*

4. What are teachers’ perspectives of the strengths and benefits for the K-3 Plus program? What are the areas in need of improvement?

Strengths and Benefits

Overall, teachers expressed high satisfaction with K-3 Plus. Most would teach for K-3 Plus again. They see many benefits to students, not only gains in academic achievement but also increased psychological preparation. As mentioned above, small class sizes and a lack of distractions mean teachers have more time for instruction, creative approaches, ability to use materials not normally used in their classrooms, and one-to-one and differentiated instruction. Teachers see these practices as translating, most importantly, into student academic improvement and preparation for school. They also note their own job satisfaction as a key benefit to K-3 Plus. Some teachers also report an increase in parent-school connectedness as a noteworthy benefit.

Student Academic Improvement and Preparation for School

K: *The children in my class are more advanced in every area (behavior, school routines, listening etc.)*

K: *Noticeable difference in academic progress in math and literacy between the eleven K-3 Plus students and four students that started later... letters, counting, rhyming, writing names, knowing the alphabet. Difference in fall test scores. K-3 Plus gave students a “jump start,” as well as socialization skills – few had pre-school experience.*

1st Gr: *The children in the K-3+ program got more individual instruction from me because there were only 14 in the class. Their confidence and knowledge really shone at the start of the beginning of school in August. Children in the program were familiar with routines, Nightly Reading, and had learned some decoding strategies they had not used in kindergarten. They had a head start on their literacy skills when the regular school year began. They had learned basic finger patterns for counting, and were farther along in some math concepts than their August classmates.*

2nd Gr: *The children were more prepared and knew my routines, expectations, etc... We were able to accomplish more much sooner in the school year. We are moving at a faster pace. They haven't seemed to need the time to get use to being back in the school mode and they don't appear to have "lost" as much over the long summer break...*

3rd Gr: *The students who were in summer school closed the reading loss gap that usually occurs during the summer by the time regular school began. Summer school students are also able to grasp concepts quickly due to the prep they've had, and know the routines and expectations before class. Students' oral reading scores according to DIBELS greatly improved.*

3rd Gr: *The students seemed more relaxed in the summer. They weren't distracted because there were only six classes participating. We had few behavior problems and those that we did have were easily addressed. Students were succeeding. Also, students had breakfast as a class. This made sure that every brain was able to function appropriately.*

Job satisfaction

K: *I am looking forward to participating in the program again. It was what I thought I was going to be doing when I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I am not sure I would change anything.*

2nd Gr: *I, too, was better prepared for what I needed to do with the children. I already knew most of my children. We have been able to start doing things that the other second grade classes have not started as of yet. I was able to get services for some of my students sooner in the school year because I already knew them. I feel my expectations are much higher for this time of the regular school year.*

2nd Gr: *I had only 12 students out of 20 which made a big difference for we were able to accomplish so much more. The pressure of meetings and deadlines didn't interfere or put additional stress on the teachers. I enjoyed that month of what I consider real teaching and quality time with the students. The students also felt as if it was regular school and not just another summer or tutoring program.*

3rd Gr: *There was a lack of pressure regarding meetings, paperwork, etc. which is omnipresent*

during the regular school year, and I believe this lack created an abundance of stress-free time in which to plan and teach. Students were perfectly behaved, and record keeping was a breeze. I felt like I was the best teacher I've ever been.

On the other hand:

K: *For the most part, I was with the students for at least 45 minutes longer daily than the regular school day. Since I ... had to teach without an Educational Assistant for most of the first three weeks, I had to serve breakfast and lunch to the students and take them outside for all recesses... It is much too exhausting never to have even a bathroom break away from the children. I also did not like starting each day a half hour before the duty day so that children could eat breakfast. No, I did not receive extra pay for this service I provided...I would never teach ...without support again.*

Parent-School Connectedness

K: *It's an advantage for parents too. They can get involved by coming in to class and reading. Parents are now used to being in the classroom twice a week. They are comfortable because they know you and children too. I would hope everyone could do this. No problems.*

K: *Another advantage is that parents are here in the summer and they get to know each other.*

Challenges and Areas in Need of Improvement

The challenge most often reported by teachers is the transition when the regular school year begins. Most importantly, the differences in the experiences and content covered between their K-3 Plus and new students prove to be difficult for most teachers. Another issue noted by some teachers is burn-out on the part of students and teachers alike. Logistical issues, such as late notification to schools regarding their acceptance into the program and lack of testing materials, is a third challenge described by teachers. As 2007-08 is the first year of implementation for K-3 Plus, such logistical troubles were probably unavoidable. Recognized now, however, they may be averted in the future. Finally, some teachers are challenged by their academic variance within their classroom. While such variance is not unique to the K-3 Plus classroom, the program does have the potential of concentrating many low-performing students with the same teacher.

Transition to the regular school year

While some teachers find a way to adjust to the regular school year smoothly, most find it difficult for new students, K-3 students, and themselves. In addition to having to re-teach material covered during K-3 Plus, some teachers report that they are off-pace with other classrooms in the grade-level, complicating collaboration. Though uncommon, a few K-3 Plus students move to a different classroom when the regular school year begins; some adjust better than others. Finally, a few teachers note the loss of focus some K-3 Plus students experience at the start of the regular school year.

- K: *Because of [the] increase in enrollment, 9 new students were added to the class and [I] had to start over literacy and math programs so the new students would not be so far behind. This slowed down the growth to the 'Plus' students.*
- K: *[Next time I will] slow down the pace of the core curriculum during the 25 extra days, so if new students are added the new students will not be that far behind.*
- K: *Keep students with the teachers that they had at the beginning of the school year and not change them....around to other teachers....I know that it has caused some problems for some of the student s to adjust to another teacher. Some adjusted well while others had some problems.*
- K: *One of the biggest problems has been that it has really destroyed our Kindergarten team's collaboration and planning. In the past we have been able to strengthen our lessons and evaluate student work frequently. Now that we are all "on a different page," we cannot work as effectively as in the past.*
- 1st Gr: *I hope that I can recruit from the other classes that are teaching the same grade. My goal would be to recruit enough students to create a full class. I would prefer not to receive new students at the beginning of the regular school year, unless there are no other options. This year, I received 5 new students when the traditional calendar began, and it interfered with the momentum that we had created.*
- 2nd Gr: *It was difficult balancing the classes after we had already been together for several weeks. One student was moved and I got 5 new students and that was how we tried to have the same balance as the other second grade classes.*
- 2nd Gr: *The only real problem I noticed was the pacing of curriculum because K-3 Plus student were accustomed to a faster pace of instruction with a lot of opportunities for enrichment activities. Once the other students joined us, we had to slow down our pace and as a consequence have lost most of the time we had for lesson extensions.*
- 3rd Gr: *With my class size now more than doubled, and at least half not having had the summer experience, I've had to repeat several chapters in reading and math, which my summer students feel is a waste of their time.*
- 3rd Gr: *The class size was considerably smaller [during K-3 Plus] which allowed me the opportunity to give each student individual attention in areas that they need extra support. The data was showing that my students were making gains. Then when the school year started, I had 25 students to try and help with less time to address their individual needs. The results on tests showed a noticeable drop.*
- 3rd Gr: *The problem occurs when you receive students who were not in the program for the summer. They are lost and trying to catch them up, while trying to continue the current pacing of the curriculum is almost impossible.*

3rd Gr: *Students who attended K-3+ were working at a higher level as the year began. Some of these students are still working at a high level, many however have lost their focus with the return of their friends, larger classes, and more distractions.*

Some teachers, however, don't see that the transition to the regular school year to be much of a problem:

K: *During the first week of class in July, I was able to read many books and do literacy extensions and vocabulary activities. I was able to begin [my school's] research-based literacy program earlier than in past years, so that now I am three weeks ahead of the other Kindergarten classes. This has allowed me to begin more differentiated instruction lessons and focus on individual students' needs better.*

1st Gr: *I think we have been able to move at a quicker pace because we were able to pre teach a lot of skills the children needed to be successful with our core program materials.*

1st Gr: *I think that even though I only have 10 of my 24 students that participated in the K-3+, I am able to move through the curriculum much quicker. Most of my students seem to be learning new concepts quickly. Also, the classroom environment and expectations were already established and in full swing by the time that the other students joined in. Although we revisited all of these things including making a class mission statement and rules, I believe that it was much easier for the regular school year students to join in when they had models from the K-3+ program.*

2nd Gr: *Of course the teachers that worked the K-3 Plus program were ahead in the curriculum of everyone else by August but it did not affect a break down in the school system. We are all going on with our daily curriculum as usual...I did not notice any negative effects on the students that came in August...The new students were guided into the routines by the other children. The transition went very smoothly...The skills of the new students were lower than the July students but [the new students] soon caught on. The July students were so helpful that it was like having extra EA's in the class. Their self-esteem was at an all time high for they felt smarter and proud because they knew the daily routines.*

Burnout and attendance issues

Students and teachers may tire of school and lose their motivation. Relatedly, some participating students miss much of the K-3 Plus program. Though only one teacher mentioned low attendance as a problem, attendance records (not available in all schools) indicate the problem can sometimes be significant. Among classrooms that reported attendance, 14% of students missed 5 or more K-3 Plus days. Some classrooms experienced a much higher percentage of students often absent, 50% or more.

1st Gr: *I would participate again, however I think that those schools with K-3 need to be on a year round schedule to give appropriate breaks for the students and teachers. We were all pretty burned out by mid October.*

2nd Gr: *Attendance was not as good with some of the students during the summer. They seemed to come if they felt like it and that seemed to be okay with the parents. Some seemed to resent that they had to do work when their friends were playing at home.*

2nd Gr: *Teachers and students worn out from being in school continuously with not really a good break for us or them.*

3rd Gr: *I had a week of training already scheduled so the break between the end of school and starting the K-3 Plus program wasn't sufficient. Also we only had 1 day off between finishing the program and reporting for the regular school year. It would be beneficial to have a little more time off between sessions.*

3rd Gr: *Our school started the K-3 Plus Program on July 16th. Therefore the K-3 Plus classrooms will have to end the school year a week later than other classes at our school. I feel it will be difficult for the K-3 Plus students to focus that last week of school. Next year, the K-3 Plus teachers at my school discussed starting sooner in the summer so that we do not have to dismiss our class a week later for summer vacation.*

Logistical Issues

Some teachers provide interesting ideas for improving the process of implementation in future years, including a point person to contact with questions, the possibility of using DIBELS school-wide, a system where teachers and schools can share information and support each other, and the ability to access students' cumulative folders before the start of the regular school year.

K: *I would like more district-wide information going out to parents. I would like the testing to start at the beginning, not halfway through. I would like somebody to be in charge that people can contact. Better communication and scheduling. We should have somebody at cluster or school level that can help out...There was no-one I felt comfortable calling.*

1st Gr: *My school is not currently using DIBELS school-wide, therefore I have to only do DIBELS for some of my students. It would be much easier if I could do an assessment that we are already using, or have all of my students assessed with DIBELS.*

2nd Gr: *Finding out so late about being approved for the program was a major problem. Many hours were spent contacting and trying to get enough participation, even after the program had started. It would have been more successful if I had my entire class. I had 16 out of 23 participate. Another concern was that we didn't get the DIBELS and didn't get accurate data reflecting our program. By the time we administered the DIBELS we had already been in session approximately 10 weeks.*

2nd Gr: *It would be nice to get to share and touch base with others – schools, districts. It could be a type of support system but it could also allows us to find out what others are doing and what is working/not working.*

3rd Gr: *The district could provide the Dibels Assessment materials at the start of the program so that we could test the students before any instruction takes place. It would also be helpful to have the funding for materials before the start of the program. The school could take on the responsibility of recruiting students for the program rather than the teachers spending part of their summer vacation making phone calls and writing to parents.*

3rd Gr: *One of the problems is not getting cumulative folders from students who came from other APS schools until August. There was vital information I needed but wasn't able to access until August.*

Variation in student abilities

Some teachers feel their K-3 Plus classes are advanced to begin with, others that they classes are academically low. Teachers have widely varying preferences, with some preferring a wide range of abilities and others preferring a more academically homogenous group. It may be useful for teachers to know if the school is taking steps to target particular groups of students to attend K-3 Plus, such as those with AIPs or those known to be struggling, so that teachers will not be caught unaware.

K: *The five new kids [that started with the regular school year]... are out of the loop somewhat. I didn't have to go backward though. Some of the K-3 Plus kids were so low, they weren't far ahead of new kids.*

1st Gr: *At the moment I have 16 students. Only one is a transfer from another school. All had to have an AIP written for them now in the fall. At present, only one of the students from the summer program is reading at grade level. I have five students that may have some type of learning disability. In comparing this class with last year's class and the year before, this class a group is substantially lower. I have 5 students reading at k.1 and I do not see these students moving out of that level. I feel it would have been better to redistribute these students because it could be seen as tracking or placing the very low slow learners into one class.*

1st Gr: *Problem – Several students are attending the K-3 Plus Program because the parents want the K-3 Plus teacher to be their child's teacher for the year. These students are high achievers who do not need additional support with their academic skills. The result is that there is a wide range of learning abilities ranging from beginning readers to advanced readers. This created extra work because all of the instruction had to be differentiated. The preparation time was a problem, because we were only allowed one hour per week (during Art Class) to work on preparing lessons.*

2nd Gr: *It's hard for me to discuss the benefits of K-3 Plus because the student that came to me in July were already at the top of their class.*

Summary

This formative evaluation report sought to answer four evaluation questions: (1) Is the K-3 Plus program reaching students in need of extra instruction? (2) How do teachers utilize the extra time that the K-3 Plus program provides? (3) What are most effective techniques for recruiting students to capacity? and (4) What are the key issues and questions from K-3 Plus teachers' point of view?

We find that the K-3 Plus program does reach students in need of extra instruction. Compared to their peers in the same schools, 1st thru 3rd grade K-3 Plus participants scored equally well or, more often, more poorly on standardized assessments the previous spring. The demographic characteristics of kindergarten students suggest no difference between participants and non-participants.

Most K-3 Plus time is devoted to language arts, on average thirteen hours a week, consistent across grade levels. Teachers devote half as much time, 6½ hours to math, though the amount of time devoted to math increases with grade level. The amount of time devoted to science is 2½ hours overall. Like math, the amount of time devoted to science increases with grade level. The amount of time devoted to social studies is just under two hours on average, consistent across grade levels.

Almost universally, teachers report extra time during K-3 Plus days compared to regular school days due to few pull-out programs and elective classes, smaller class sizes, and fewer teacher responsibilities outside the classroom. Most teachers report using extra time to increase instructional time, either by spending more time on core subjects or adding time to other subjects (such as social studies or science) or elective classes. A sizable minority of teachers enjoy extra time to teach differently and flexibly, by using different, often teacher-created materials and/or increasing experiential learning experiences. If they didn't do so this year, many teachers hope to incorporate more flexible curricula in the future. Most teachers note that smaller class sizes allow them to spend more time on differentiated and one-to-one instruction.

Overall, about 20% of students participate in K-3 Plus during the 2007-08 SY. Schools are responsible for most recruitment. Their techniques do not differ much school to school. Most commonly, principals send newsletters home and teachers or staff called families. Some schools target particular students, such as those with AIPs. Particularly effective strategies might be posting a message of the school marquee and advertising in neighborhood stores, churches, pre-schools, and within the school itself. Many teachers feel recruitment is a large burden on schools and would like district personnel to help with this responsibility.

Most teachers are satisfied with K-3 Plus due especially to the academic improvements in their students. They also believe the program helps involve parents and allows them to teach better, without the distractions of the regular school year. Yet they point to some important considerations for schools and the district. While teachers almost universally appreciate the small summer classes, some have difficulty when the regular school year begins and new students join the classroom, pointing to an important trade-off schools should consider. Other issues arise at this time as well, such as difficulties with being off-pace from the other classes in the same

grade. Some teachers have noted burn-out on the part of students and themselves. Finally, K-3 Plus might sometimes amplify the problem of having a narrow range of academic abilities within a single class, though some teachers may prefer that.

Limits to this Research

Quantitative analyses. The quantitative analyses in this report are based on a quasi-experimental design since participation in K-3 Plus is voluntary (not randomly assigned). Thus, as always, assessments of similarities and differences between treatment and comparison groups should be examined with a note of caution. Unfortunately, no math comparisons can be made for 2nd and 3rd graders, as the district lacks a standard instrument. No standardized assessments yet exist for science or social studies. The lack of absence data in most schools is regrettable, as a key feature of implementation success is student participation. Differences in *a priori* academic achievement skills between participants and non-participants should continue to be evaluated, as teachers and schools may change their behavior over time, a common phenomenon known as “program drift.”

The average number of minutes spent on activities should be seen as estimates, if fairly accurate ones. Most teachers provided a single week’s planned schedule, which might not have been representative of the entire K-3 Plus program. In addition, the schedule might not have taken place exactly as planned. Some schedules included time blocks devoted to more than one subject, for example “science or social studies.” In such cases, the evaluator divided the time block into two. The evaluator did account for lunch and recess breaks, as well as elective activities. Most teachers include “getting ready to start” and “getting ready to go” time into their schedules, increasing the accuracy of the estimates.

Qualitative analysis. The qualitative data was collected entirely from teacher surveys. Any survey, qualitative or quantitative, could be biased if survey participants are motivated to answer in particular ways. The fact that not every teacher answered the survey might give pause, as perhaps only those with strong opinions chose to complete it. However, the survey’s questions sought opinions about what was successful as well as what needed improvement, and most teachers answered accordingly with both positive and negative information. More importantly, the only stakeholders questioned for this analysis were teachers. As paid staff, teachers might be more favorable towards K-3 Plus than other stakeholder groups not included in this analysis, such as principals, parents, students, district staff, and non-participants. In addition, this analysis does not systematically examine possible “side effects” of K-3 Plus. Some conceivable side effects include student and teacher burn-out (mentioned), reduced student enrollment/attendance or lack of available teachers for the mandated summer school program, and negative impacts on participating families, such as loss of vacations and family time together or development of skills outside schoolwork.

Appendix A: Teacher Survey

1. Please provide a detailed schedule of a typical K-3 Plus Day (before the start of the regular school year). Include times and content/use of each time slot, e.g. subject, recess, lunch etc.
2. Now that the regular school year has begun, I:
 - a. teach mostly the same students.
 - b. teach the same grade level, but mostly different students.
 - c. teach at a different grade level. (Please SKIP to Question 6.)
3. Compared to typical days during the regular school year, during K-3 Plus days did you usually:
 - a. Literacy
 - i. Spend more instructional time on literacy
 - ii. Spend less instructional time on literacy
 - iii. Spend same amount of time on literacy
 - b. Math
 - i. Spend more instructional time on math
 - ii. Spend less instructional time on math
 - iii. Spend same amount of time on math
4. How did your instruction during K-3 Plus days compare to your instructional activities and methods after the start of the regular school year? How was it similar? How was it different?
5. How did the K-3 Plus program impact your teaching during the regular school year? (pacing, curriculum, or any other aspect of teaching?)
6. How did you/your school recruit students? Please describe specific activities, locations, and times.
7. What outcomes, benefits and/or problems have you noticed so far as a result of the K-3 Plus Program?
8. What will you do differently if you participate in the K-3 Plus program again in the future?
9. What can your school and/or the district do to help make K-3 Plus more successful?

Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with us!