

MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES**CAMPUS**

Del Valle Middle School
Academically Acceptable
2007-08

DISTRICT

Del Valle ISD

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The **goal** of Del Valle Middle School's program is to improve student performance in social studies.

Key strategies include activities to increase student interest in content, a focus on vocabulary development, and use of pre-AP strategies in regular classrooms.

Outcomes include increases in performance on the eighth-grade social studies TAKS.

EFFECTIVENESS*Before*

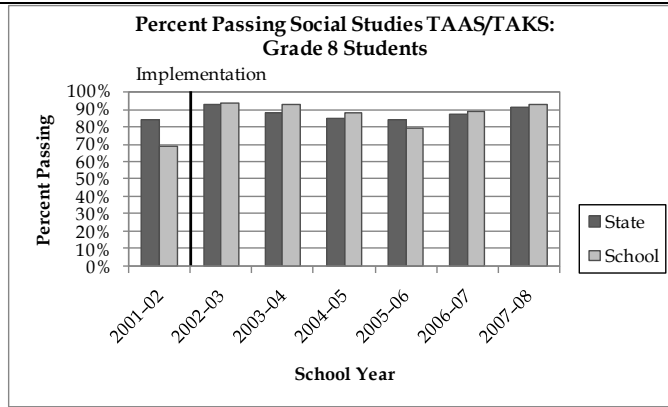
Prior to program implementation, in 2001-02, the percentage of Del Valle Junior High students passing Grade 8 social studies TAAS was 69%, below the state average of 84%. The percentage of African American students passing was 73%, the percentage of Hispanic students passing was 62%, and the percentage of White students passing was 91%.

After

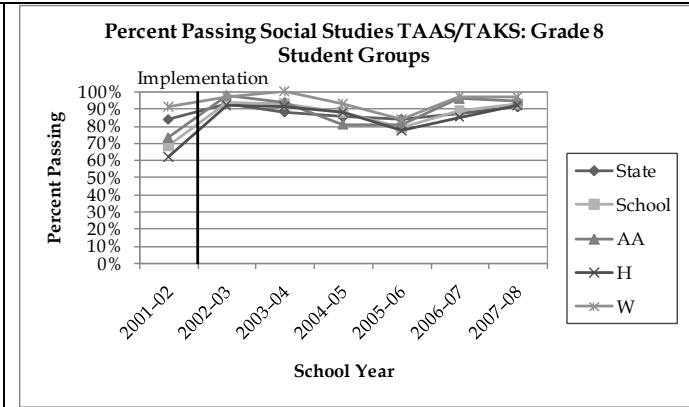
Since implementation in 2002-03, the percentage of students passing Grade 8 social studies TAKS has improved. In 2007-08, the percentage passing (93%) was higher than the state average of 91%. For African American students, the percentage passing was 95%, 92% of Hispanic students passed, and 97% of White students passed.

Please take one minute to answer the feedback survey (six questions).

[Best Practices Feedback Survey](#)



Source: AEIS



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CONTEXT/IMPLEMENTATION

Demographics (2007-08)

Grade Levels Served		6-8		Campus Enrollment		940	
Ethnic Distribution				Economically Disadvantaged		688	73.2%
African American	182	19.4%	Limited English Proficient (LEP)		108	11.5%	
Hispanic	656	69.8%	At-Risk		514	54.7%	
White	87	9.3%	Mobility (2006-07)		166	20.7%	
Asian/Pacific Islander	11	1.2%					

Source: AEIS

Background

- Del Valle Middle School (DVMS), previously Del Valle Junior High, was the only junior high school in the district until 2003-04, when a new middle school was opened, and the junior high student population was divided. DVMS began serving sixth-grade students in 2007-08.

Procedures

- Social studies staff reported that the initiative took shape as teachers collaborated to think of ways to increase student interest in social studies content. Teachers began writing a standardized social studies curriculum in the summer of 2002 with implementation beginning in the 2002-03 academic year.
- The campus-developed social studies curriculum incorporated components of the History Alive program developed by the Teachers' Curriculum Institute as a major secondary resource (for details, see <http://www.teachcti.com/programs/>). All teachers received History Alive training. Program components used on a regular basis in social studies teaching included the program's "6 Powerful Strategies." These strategies, which are based on multiple intelligences research, are:
 - visual discovery through interactive slide lectures, which the campus used in combination with social studies resources from Ignite (for details, see <http://www.ignitelearning.com/socialstudies/>);
 - dynamic skill building activities to replace worksheets;
 - experiential exercises to make abstract concepts more tangible;
 - writing for understanding for students of all writing abilities;
 - response groups to analyze the complexity of historical events; and
 - problem-solving through small-group work.
- The campus also purchased History Alive binders or interactive student notebooks, which were used on a daily basis in classroom activities (for details, see <http://uweb.txstate.edu/teachamhistory/lessons/notebook.pdf>).
- Social studies teachers developed an introductory unit for the first three weeks of school that explored what it means to be an American. This unit was based on programming developed by the Bill of Rights Institute and coordinated locally by the State Bar of Texas (for details, see <http://www.billofrightsinstitute.org/About/history/>). The unit was introduced at the beginning of each year in all grades and involved a variety of schoolwide activities, including a tee shirt design competition.
- Social studies teachers also collaborated to create a list of essential content words and academic skills vocabulary for all grade levels. They reviewed released TAKS to identify important social studies content vocabulary, question verbs, and instructions (for example, draw a conclusion). Staff paid particular attention to social studies content often referred to in texts and on TAKS through the use of multiple synonyms (for example, manifest destiny/westward expansion, American revolution/war for independence). Staff referred to the list as a "living document" that they added to on an ongoing basis, especially as they identified limited student understanding of a word or concept.

- Social studies teachers developed daily classroom procedures in all grades for introduction and review of social studies vocabulary. At the beginning of every class, teachers presented a 10-minute “bell ringer” or warm-up activity focused on one of the five words from the list introduced each week. At the end of the week, students added the new words to a running glossary they kept in the back of their interactive notebooks. In addition, teachers regularly administered vocabulary quizzes of 10-20 words.
- To support English language learners (ELL) with vocabulary development, social studies teachers also provided access to computerized vocabulary practice games and helped students to create card rings (illustrated index cards looped on a curtain hanger).
- All social studies units were introduced with a thematic question and associated performance task (for example, an interactive timeline or an illustrated Venn diagram).
- Social studies teachers integrated use of primary sources or historical documents into instruction (for details, see http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ssc/primary_resources/primary_sources.html). Teachers used primary sources four times per year in alignment with unit themes and reported that the use of these documents, sometimes modified, were particularly helpful with ELLs. Teachers also introduced Document-Based Questions (DBQ) into regular social studies classrooms, a strategy focused on use of primary sources in developing essays. DBQs are commonly used in pre-AP and AP social studies courses.
- Social studies teachers also adapted other pre-AP strategies, such as use of literature with historical importance and dialectical journals, for regular social studies classes. Teachers used short stories that illustrated an important historical context or concept and taught students how to keep dialectical journals as they read texts. Through use of the journals, students copied or paraphrased a concept or idea from the story into their journal and responded to the idea with their own thoughts, engaging in a “continuing conversation” with the text.
- Social studies teachers also collaborated with reading teachers to identify and assign novels in reading classes that aligned with and further illustrated social studies content.
- Social studies teachers also incorporated oral practice in reading into instruction, sometimes with adapted texts.
- To increase engagement, social studies teachers sponsored occasional “movie days” after school to show films related to social studies content. Transportation home was provided.

- Several social studies projects from different grade levels that were initially piloted with external grants were incorporated into the curriculum.
 - For example, the social studies department received a Target Field Trip grant (for details, see <http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031880>) to create a seventh-grade project based on a specific government Texas Essential Knowledge and Skill (TEKS) (816.D) that is typically introduced in Grade 8. The Grade 7 project included trips to the LBJ ranch and library and was used to explore the multiple concepts contained in the specific TEKS.
 - Additionally, a grant from the Junior League funded a project to create and present a play based on selected social studies TEKS. The project was developed in collaboration with the theatre teacher, and the play was presented in an assembly the night before the social studies TAKS test.
 - A grant from Semitech, Inc., to enhance community involvement in politics was used to create a simulated town hall meeting to conduct voter registration. This annual event and dinner was put on by eighth-grade social studies classes, and all students and parents were invited.
- Social studies teachers individually attended additional training and shared strategies informally with other teachers. Because some social studies teachers were also coaches and were unavailable to meet after school, the campus created a common planning period for social studies teachers in 2008-09.
- Social studies teachers decided to decrease the number of tests they administered and developed one test per unit that was TAKS-formatted. Unit tests were cumulative and addressed content from previous units. This approach was preferable, staff reported, to using released TAKS tests as benchmark assessments because these tests included content to which students had not yet been introduced.

Funding

- In addition to the grants described above to support the development of thematic projects, social studies staff reported that the district provided teacher stipends for participation in any social studies training teachers indicated they were interested in attending. The district also purchased materials associated with trainings based on teacher recommendations.

Lessons Learned

- Staff reported that campus and district leadership were very supportive of the social studies department in developing and enhancing the social studies curriculum. Consequently, staff were able to provide instruction that was less textbook-oriented and more thematic and that incorporated interactive, interdisciplinary activities.

Other Campus-Reported Resources

- Texas Council for the Social Studies. See <http://www.txcss.org/>
- Scholars of History Integrating Primary Sources (SHIPS). See http://www5.esc13.net/socialstudies/ships_trc.html

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