

MEMORANDUM

November 20, 2012

TO: School Board Members

FROM: Terry B. Grier, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

SUBJECT: TWILIGHT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM, 2011–2012

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, 713-556-6700

Attached is the 2011–2012 Twilight High School program report. The report describes program outcomes in the second year of program implementation. It describes characteristics of program participants, participant assessment of the program, and academic outcomes for the 2011–2012 school year in comparison to the 2010–2011 school year. The Twilight High School program offers opportunities for students to make progress toward completing high school and planning a career during non-traditional school hours. It offers coursework, credit recovery, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills preparation through the provision of on-line and in-person services. The Twilight High School program began operations in November 2010.

Key findings are as follows:

- A total of 1,610 courses were completed by 487 students during the 2011–2012 school year. In the 2010–2011 school year, 107 students completed 250 courses.
- A total of 56 students enrolled in the Twilight High School program graduated between September 1, 2011 and August 31, 2012. This was equivalent to 16.1 percent of the participants enrolled in grade 11 and grade 12 who completed coursework.
- The results of a voluntary survey indicated that most students enrolled in the Twilight High School program for the 2011–2012 school year to graduate or earn a diploma (92.6 percent) and to recover credit (18.5 percent).

Administrative Response:

Advanced Virtual Academy (AVA) Twilight High School worked diligently to achieve HISD's objective to decrease the dropout rate, by offering flexible school hours for those who experienced a disruption in schooling either by choice or circumstance. The school also offered a second chance for the over-aged who dropped out, then realized the need for a high school diploma. Four hundred eighty-seven actively enrolled students from ages 15 to 24 took advantage of this opportunity to complete 1,610 courses. Out of this 487, 56 proud students graduated from AVA Twilight between September 1, 2011 and August 31, 2012. Many of these students were excited to continue their education by enrolling into two- and four-year colleges. A few chose the military, while others looked for promotions in and to full-time employment on current and future jobs. AVA Twilight's blended learning program was instrumental in opening up doors to a better life by equipping these students with the education and credentials

necessary to enter those doors. These were students who otherwise would be counted as drop-outs in HISD.

The dedicated staff, the rigorous digital curriculum, and flexible instructional time proved beneficial to many students who needed flexible attendance hours and a curriculum available to them 24 hours a day. However, a major barrier was the access to teachers before 4:00 p.m.

The administrator agrees with the need for expansion to independent locations that offer all day instructional services that cannot be achieved at every location on school campuses. This option was discussed in the fall of 2011 by the principal, HISD Student Engagement, the City of Houston and HCC as a possibility at the city's Multi-purpose centers. This need is magnified by the fact that many of the students do not have computers or internet access to be able to take advantage of a much needed program.

Should you have any further questions, please contact my office or Carla Stevens in Research and Accountability at 713-556-6700.



TBG

Attachment

cc: Superintendent's Direct Reports
Chief School Officers
Richard Barajas
Mark Shenker
LaMyrle Ituah



RESEARCH

Educational Program Report

TWILIGHT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM PROGRAM EVALUATION, 2011-2012

DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH AND ACCOUNTABILITY
HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



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TWILIGHT HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM 2011–2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program Description

The Twilight High School program in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) offers opportunities for students to make progress toward completing high school and planning a career during non-traditional school hours. It offers coursework, credit recovery, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) preparation through the provision of online and in-person services. The Twilight High School program serves students who are seeking credit recovery and accelerated instruction as well as students who are at risk of not completing their education—those who are overage, parents, minimally employed, unemployed with multiple grade failures, experiencing truancy problems, or were previously reported as dropping out. The Twilight High School program, which began operations in November 2010, is organized as the Advanced Virtual Academy. It is housed in satellite buildings at seven high schools which serve as virtual academic centers for online coursework: DeVry/Contemporary Learning Center, Jesse Jones, Kashmere, Charles Milby, George Scarborough, Sharpstown (main campus), and Evan Worthing high schools. The purpose of this evaluation is to report program outcomes in the second year of program implementation including the following:

- Characteristics of program participants;
- Participant assessment of the program;
- Academic outcomes for the 2011–2012 school year in comparison to the 2010–2011 school year.

Highlights

- A total of 1,610 courses were completed by 487 students during the 2011–2012 school year. In the 2010–2011 school year, 107 students completed 250 courses.
- A total of 56 students enrolled in the Twilight High School program graduated between September 1, 2011 and August 31, 2012. This was equivalent to 16.1 percent of the participants enrolled in grade 11 and grade 12 who completed coursework.
- Over the two years of program implementation, 77 students have graduated through the Twilight High School program.
- The results of a voluntary survey indicated that most students enrolled in the Twilight High School program for the 2011–2012 school year to graduate or earn a diploma (92.6 percent) and to recover credit (18.5 percent).
- Student survey respondents reflected positively on the program staff, and the overwhelming majority indicated that they would recommend the Twilight High School program to their friends.

Recommendations

1. As the Twilight High School program has been successful, program expansion is recommended. Expanding the program to additional satellite centers may increase the number of students the program is able to serve and graduate.
2. It is recommended that program staff assess the need for an increased number of teachers. Survey respondents' recommendations for increasing the teaching staff could have reflected a real perceived need or it could be a by-product of the small sample size.
3. To increase the number of students providing feedback on the program, it is recommended that the annual student survey be conducted through a paper-based format.

Introduction

The Twilight High School program in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) offers opportunities for students to make progress toward completing high school and planning a career during non-traditional school hours. It offers coursework, credit recovery, and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) preparation through the provision of online and in-person services. The Twilight High School program serves students who are seeking credit recovery and accelerated instruction as well as students who are at risk of not completing their education—those who are overage, parents, minimally employed, unemployed with multiple grade failures, experiencing truancy problems, or were previously reported as dropping out. The Twilight High School program, which began operations in November 2010, is organized as the Advanced Virtual Academy and is housed in seven satellite locations which serve as virtual academic centers for online coursework.

The Twilight High School program is aligned with HISD's Core Initiative 3: Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports and its goal that every student will have the rigorous instructional program required for college and career success. In support of HISD's strategic direction, the Twilight High School program aims to decrease the dropout rate of HISD and to provide an opportunity for students to accelerate their educational careers.

The Twilight High School program combines components of several education models implemented in the district: blended learning (e.g., the combination of online and face-to-face instruction), alternative instruction hours, and dropout recovery. Most coursework at Twilight High School is completed through APEX, an online learning portal. Teachers are available for face-to-face tutoring at the campuses during school hours for mathematics, English/language arts, science, Spanish, and for students who need special education services on a predetermined schedule. Students move through course work at their own pace. Once a student achieves a passing rate in a course, the student can enroll in additional courses. While the goal of the Twilight High School program is high school graduation, its staff sets students' sights on college entrance and career preparation.

Method

Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were used in the evaluation of the Twilight High School program. The students of the Twilight High School program were the primary sources of information about the school in operation and students' attitudes. Students were surveyed through Survey Monkey™. Students' background and performance data were obtained through the Chancery Student Information System.

Data Limitations

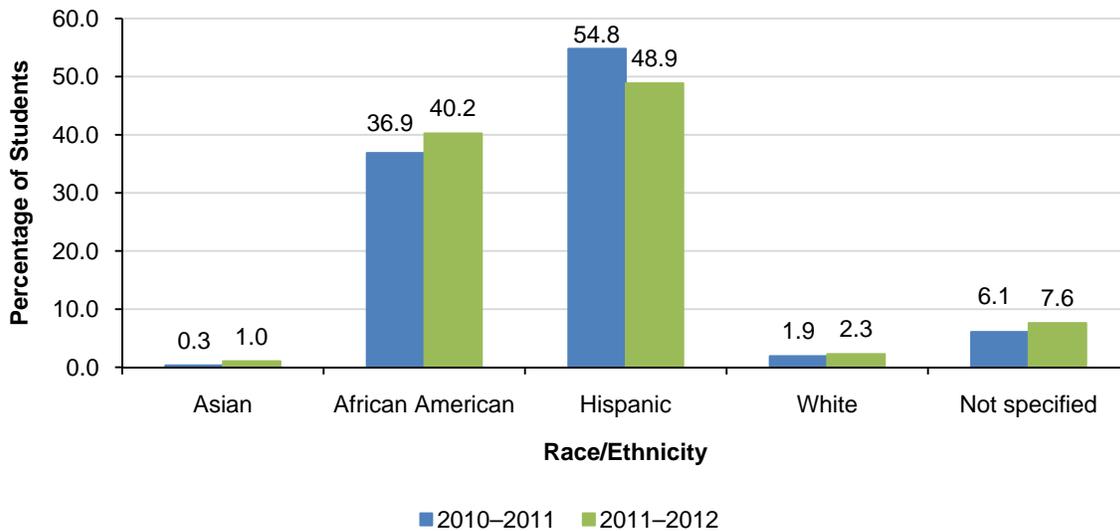
Of the 791 students enrolled in the Twilight High school program over the course of the 2011–2012 school year, 487 of whom completed coursework, only 27 students responded to the voluntary student survey. This greatly limited the types of inferences that could be made from the survey responses and prevented drawing conclusions about the entire Twilight High School program population. However, the survey responses could be used to provide insight into how some program participants experience the program, creating a foundation for future exploration into program participants' experiences.

Results

What were the characteristics and motivations of Twilight High School program participants?

- In this section, only information about students for whom complete records are available is presented. A component of the Twilight High School program grading model is the repetition of courses until content mastery is achieved. Information on course enrollment and completion is available only after students have achieved content mastery. Therefore, only information about students who completed coursework is presented.
- Over the course of the 2011–2012 academic year, 487 students enrolled in the Twilight High School program and completed coursework. A higher percentage of this population was female (51.7 percent, n=252) than was male (48.3 percent, n=235).
- Enrollees who completed coursework were primarily of Hispanic and African American origin. Hispanics represented 48.9 percent (n= 238) of the population; African Americans represented 40.2 percent (n= 196); and whites represented 2.3 percent (n=11). The demographic composition of students who completed coursework in the 2010–2011 school year can be found in **Figure 1**.

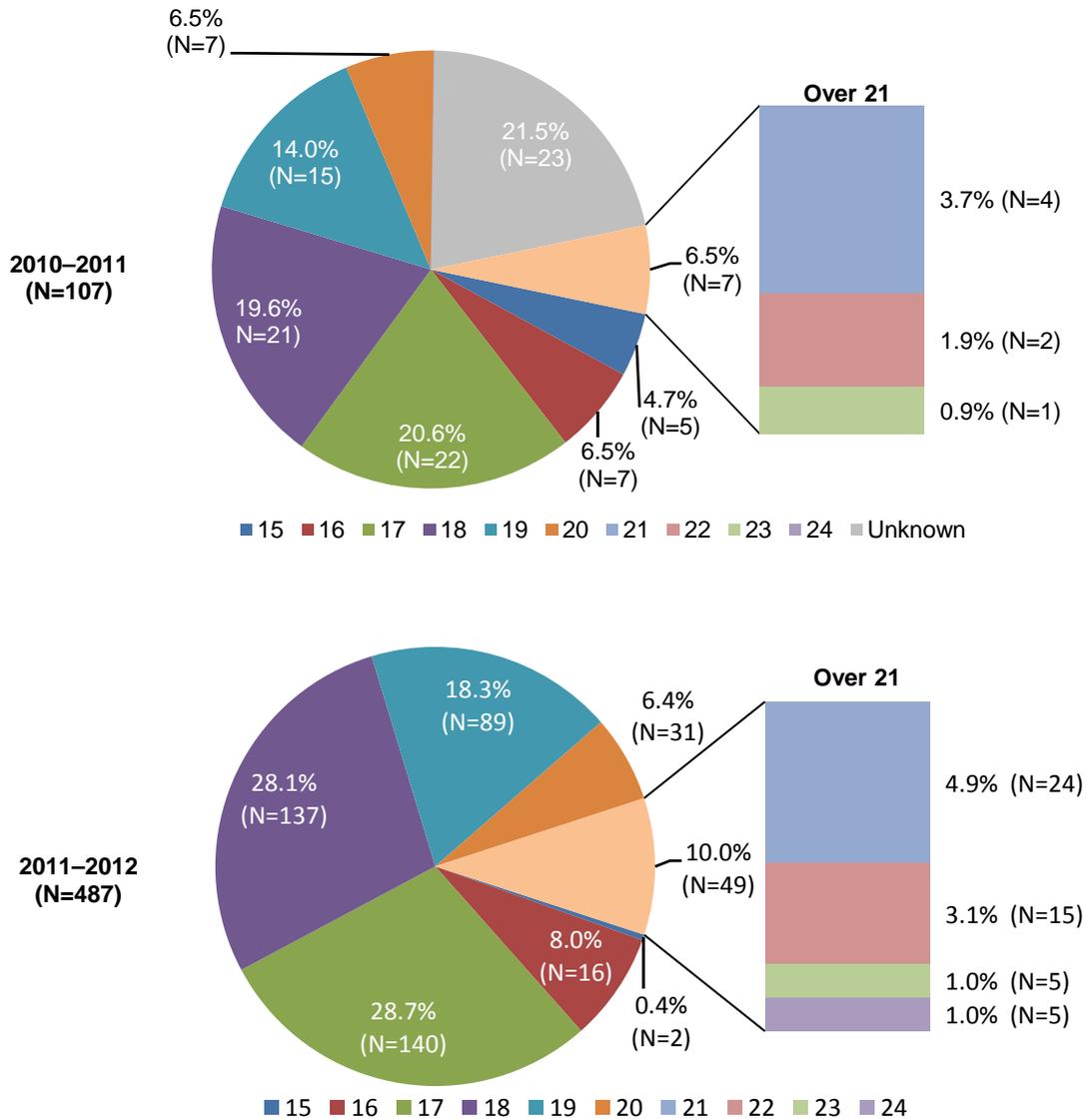
Figure 1. Racial and ethnic backgrounds of Twilight High School program enrollees who completed coursework, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



Source: Chancery Management System, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012. Indicators of multiple racial/ethnic identities were not available.

- The ages of Twilight High School program students ranged from 15 to 24 in the 2011–2012 school year as compared to ranging from 14 to 26 in the 2010–2011 school year. In the 2011–2012 school year, 169 students (34.7 percent of students completing coursework) were over the age of 18. In the 2010–2011 school year, 29 students (27.1 percent of students completing coursework) were over the age of 18. See **Figure 2** (page 5) and **Appendix A** (page 16).

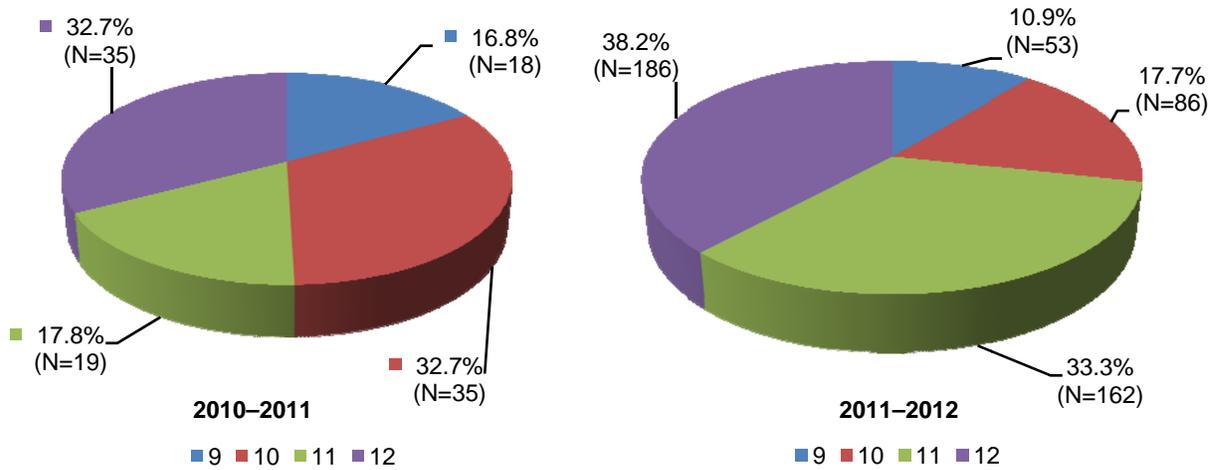
Figure 2. Ages of Twilight High School program enrollees who completed coursework, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



Note: Age is calculated as of September 1, 2010, for the 2010–2011 school year and September 1, 2011, for the 2011–2012 school year.

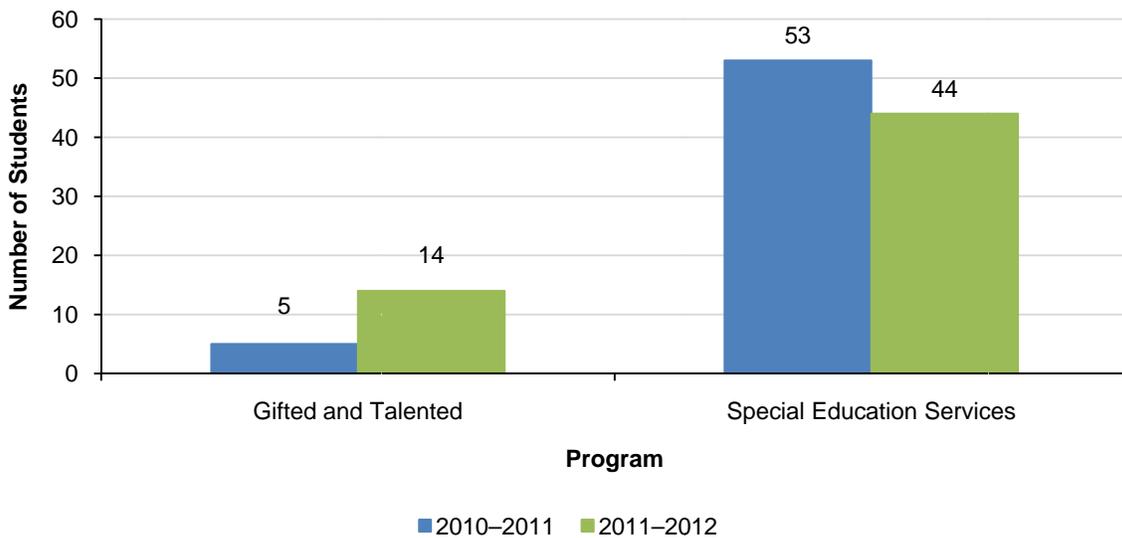
- Students were enrolled in grades 9–12. In the 2011–2012 school year, 186 grade 12 students, 162 grade 11 students, 86 grade 10 students, and 53 grade 9 students were enrolled and completed coursework. The enrollment figures for students completing courses in the 2010–2011 school year can be found in **Figure 3**, page 6.

Figure 3. Grade levels of Twilight High School program enrollees who completed coursework, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



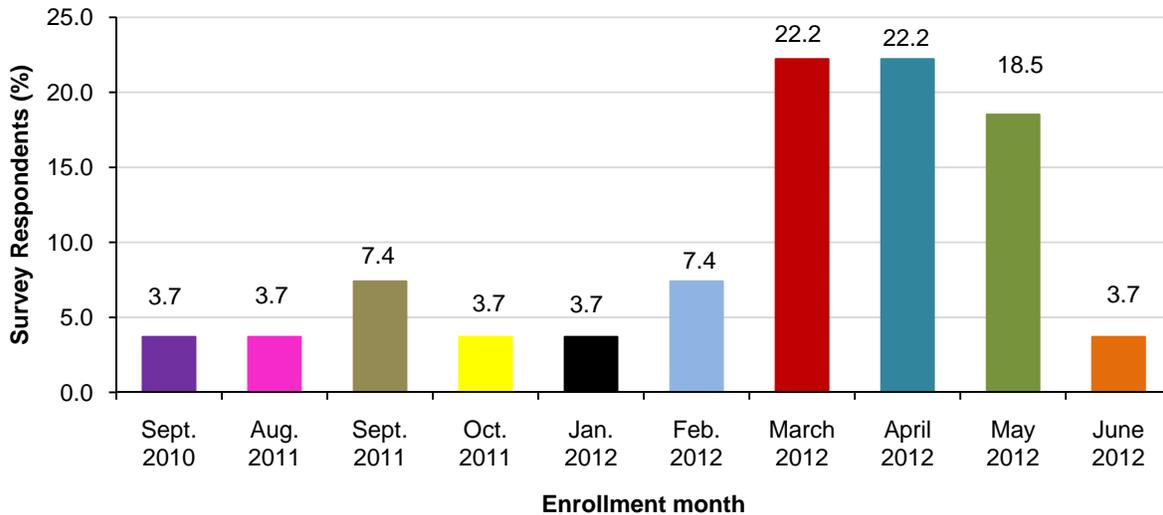
- In the 2011–2012 school year and in the 2010–2011 school year, 58 students who were identified as needing specialized education services (i.e., gifted and talented programming and special education services) completed coursework in the Twilight High School program. See **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. Twilight High School program enrollees receiving specialized education services, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



- Twenty-seven students responded to the 2011–2012 Twilight High School Student Survey. Like all HISD schools, the Twilight High School program admits students throughout the school year. The majority of survey respondents reported enrolling during Spring 2012 (March–May). See **Figure 5**, page 7.

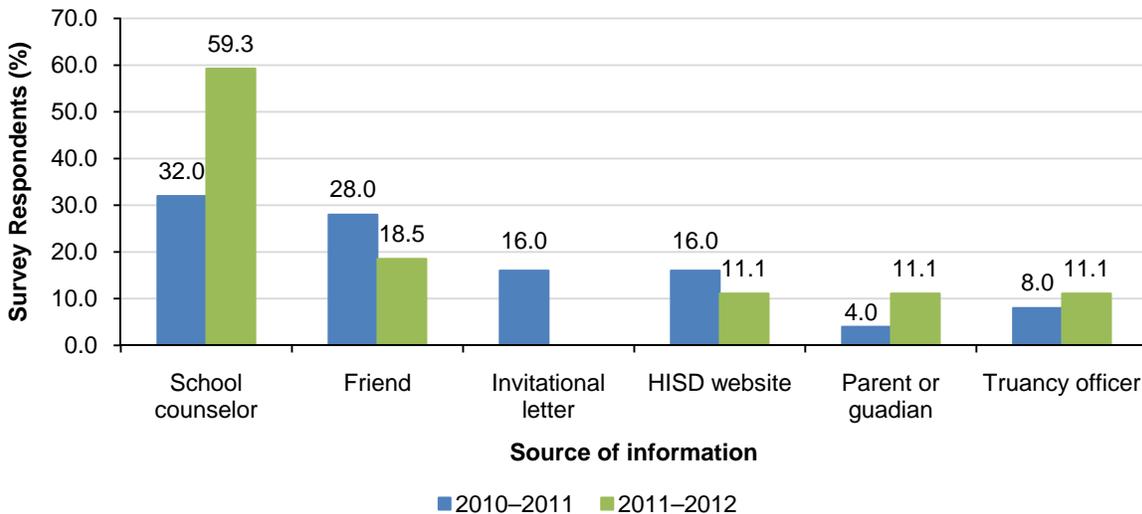
Figure 5. Enrollment of students in the Twilight High School program by months, 2011–2012



Note: Start month for one respondent is not reported due to an error in data entry.

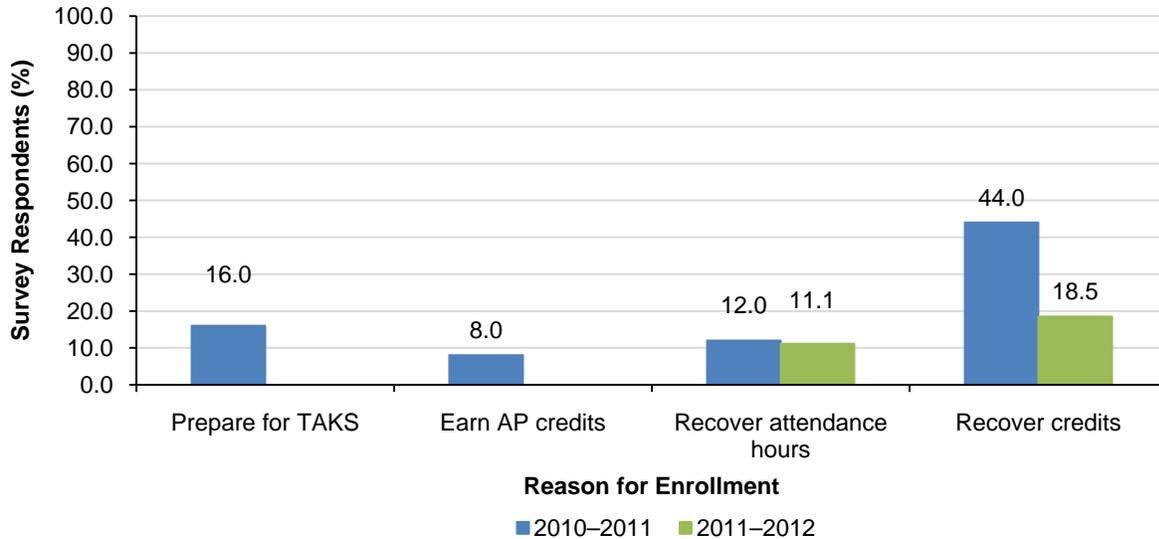
- Survey respondents were asked to report all sources from which they had heard of the Twilight High School program. About 59 percent of respondents (n=16) heard about Twilight High School from a school counselor. Five respondents (18.5 percent) heard about the program from a friend. The HISD website, a truancy officer, and a parent/guardian each were the source of information about the Twilight High School program for 11.1 percent (three students). Other reported sources of information about the Twilight program were court mandate, an HISD high school principal, and administrators affiliated with a different school district. Unlike the 2010–2011 school year, no 2011–2012 respondents reported hearing about the program through an invitational letter. See **Figure 6** below.

Figure 6. Sources of information about the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



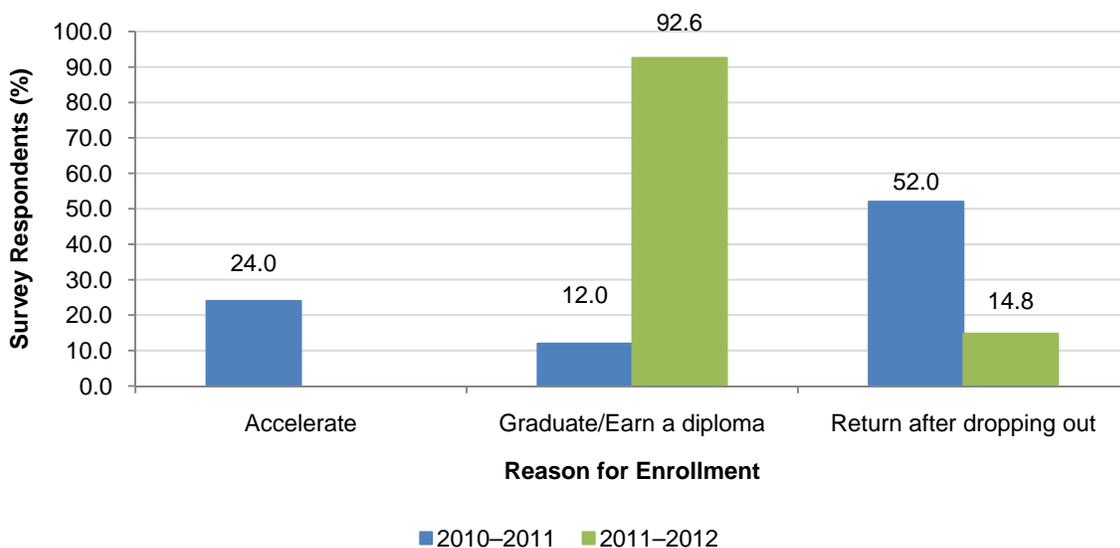
- Students were asked to identify all of their motivations for enrolling in the Twilight High School program. They indicated their desires to graduate high school or earn a diploma (92.6 percent), recover credits (18.5 percent), return to high school after dropping out (14.8 percent), and recover attendance hours (11.1 percent). Respondents to the 2010–2011 student survey reported a broader range of motivations for program enrollment than 2011–2012 survey respondents. See **Figure 7a** and **Figure 7b**.

Figure 7a. Motivations for enrolling in the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



Note: Respondents were able to select more than one motivation.

Figure 7b. Motivations for enrolling in the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012

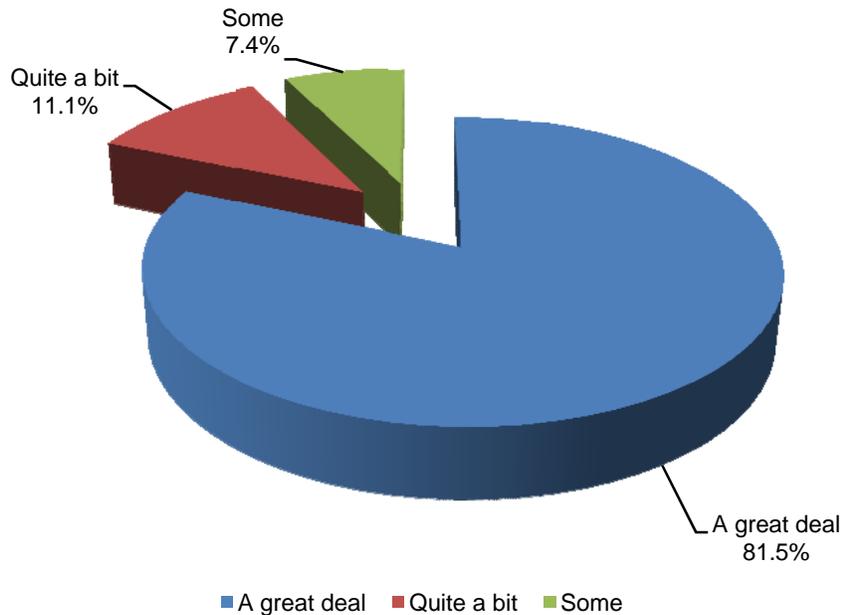


Note: Respondents were able to select more than one motivation.

How did students evaluate the Twilight High School program?

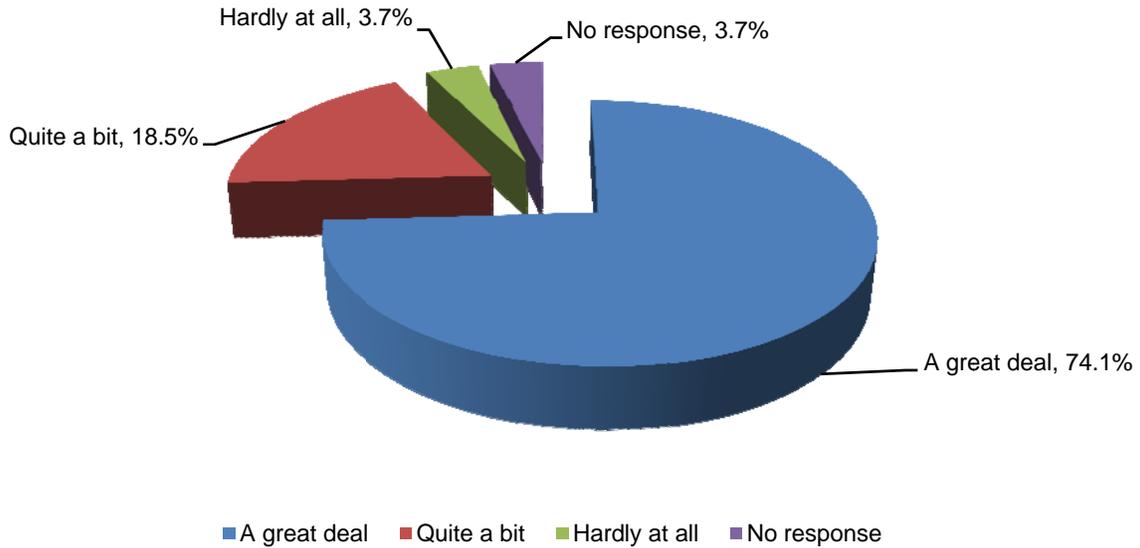
- Respondents to the 2011–2012 student survey were asked to report how much they identified with the following statements:
 - *After attending Twilight High School, I feel certain that I will be able to pursue the career of my choice.* Twenty-two students (81.5 percent) agreed with the statement a great deal; three students (11.1 percent) reported agreeing quite a bit; and two students (7.4 percent) reported some agreement with the statement. See **Figure 8**.

Figure 8. After attending Twilight High School, I feel certain that I will be able to pursue the career of my choice



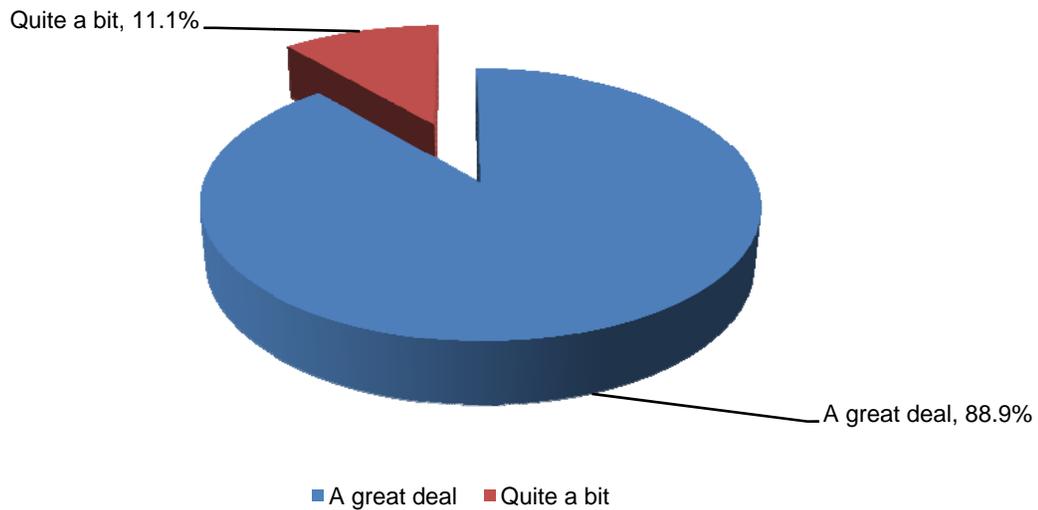
- *After attending Twilight High School, I feel certain that I will attend college.* Twenty students (74.1 percent) reported that the statement applied to them a great deal; 5 students (18.5 percent) reported that it applied quite a bit. One student (3.7 percent) reported that the statement hardly applied at all. See **Figure 9**, page 10.

Figure 9. After attending Twilight High School, I feel certain that I will be able to pursue the career of my choice



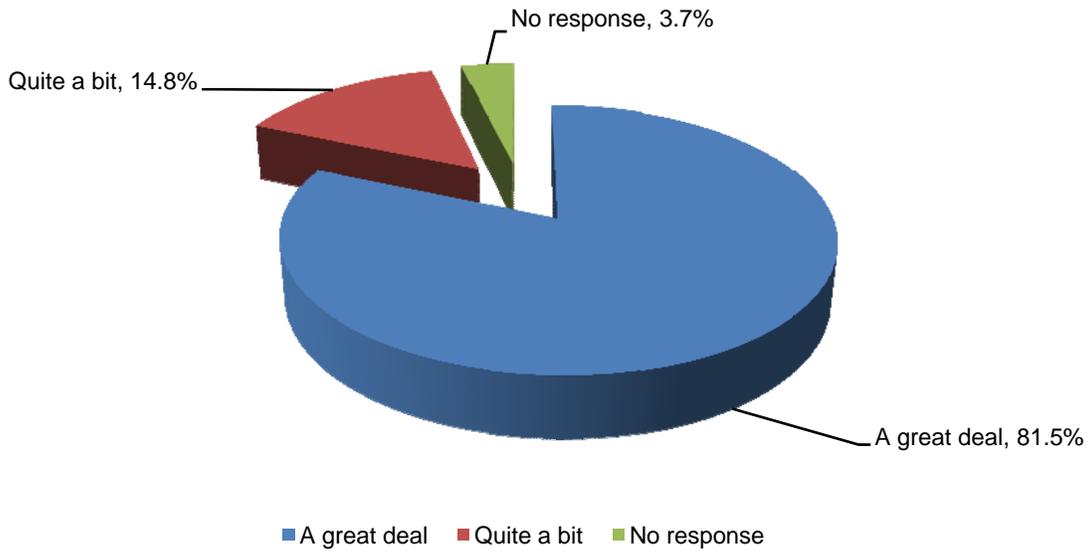
- *The staff of Twilight High School are helpful to me.* Twenty-four students (88.9 percent) indicated that the statement applied to them a great deal, and three students (11.1 percent) indicated that it applied to them quite a bit. See **Figure 10**.

Figure 10. The staff of Twilight High School are helpful to me



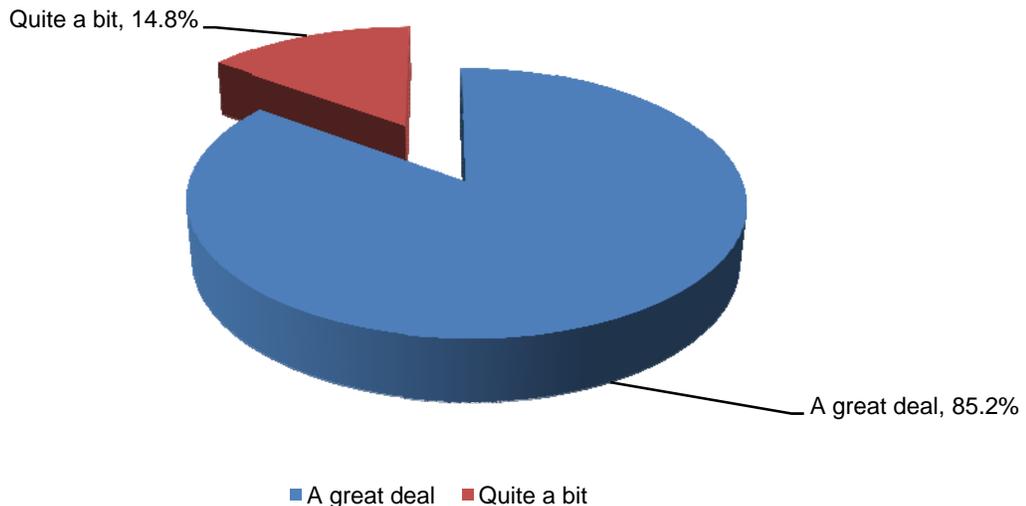
- *The staff of Twilight High School are supportive of me.* Twenty-two students (81.5 percent) indicated that the statement applied to them a great deal, and four students (14.8 percent) indicated that it applied to them quite a bit. See **Figure 11**.

Figure 11. The staff of Twilight High School are supportive of me



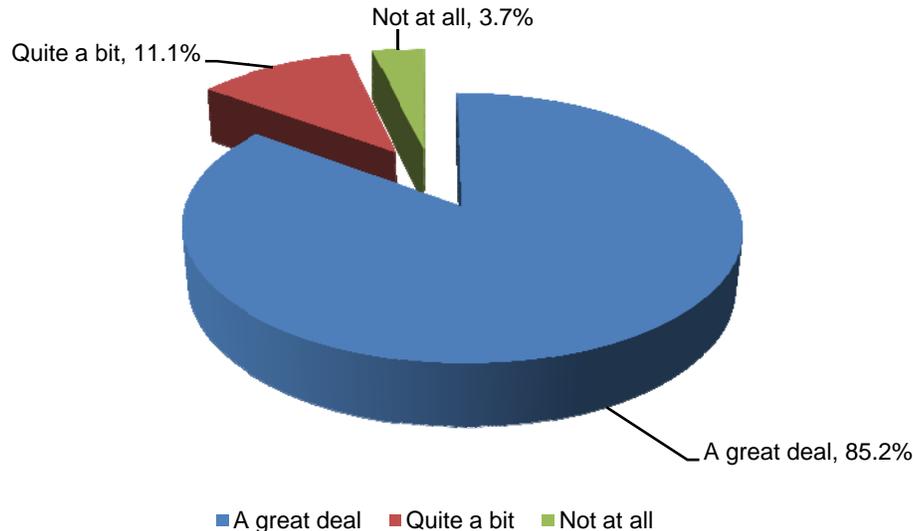
- *The staff of Twilight High School understand and work with my schedule.* Twenty-three students (85.2 percent) indicated that the statement applied to them a great deal, and four students (14.8 percent) indicated that it applied to them quite a bit. See **Figure 12**.

Figure 12. The staff of Twilight High School understand and work with my schedule



- *I recommend that others attend Twilight High School.* Twenty-three respondents (85.2 percent) recommended that others attend Twilight High School a great deal; three respondents (11.1 percent) agreed with the statement quite a bit; and one student (3.7 percent) would not recommend Twilight High School at all. See **Figure 13**.

Figure 13. I recommend that others attend Twilight High School



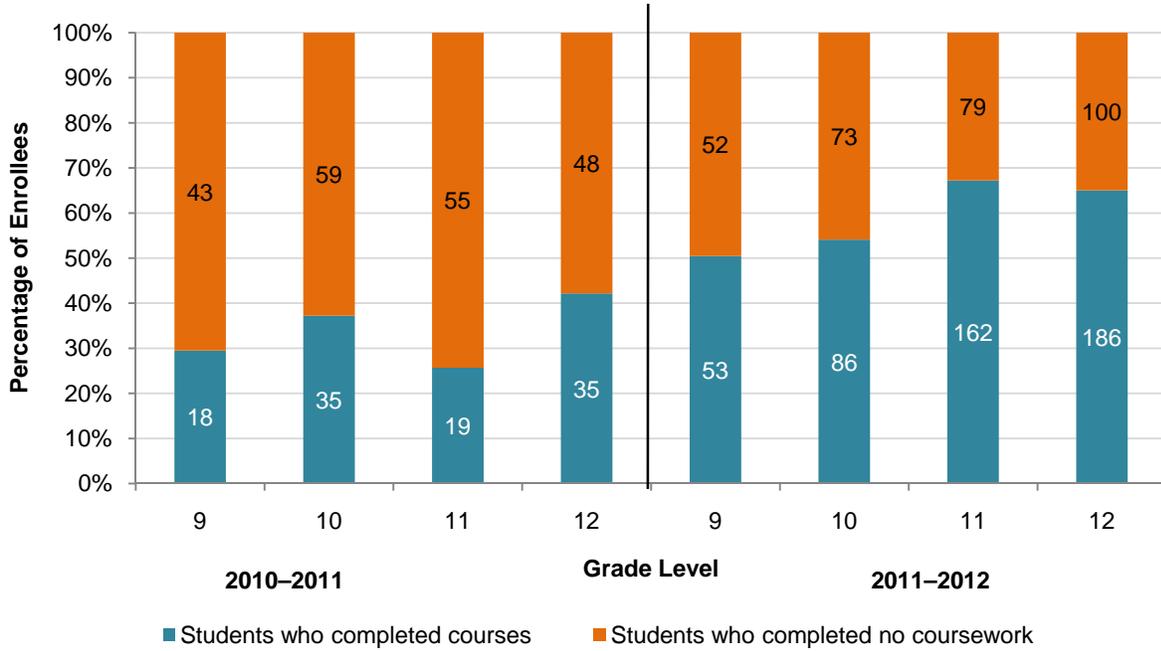
- When asked what the Twilight High School program could do better to help students like themselves achieve their academic and educational goals, the majority of survey respondents indicated that they would not change the program. Other students made the following suggestions:
 - Increase the number of teachers
 - Increase the number of course offerings
 - Provide meals or snacks
 - Reduce the minimum number of weekly in-person sessions to one

How did students enrolled in the Twilight High School program perform during the 2011–2012 school year as compared to student performance in the 2010–2011 school year?

- A component of the Twilight High School program grading model is the repetition of courses until content mastery is achieved. Information on course enrollment and completion is available only after students have met the specified criteria. As a result, the data on course enrollment and completion reflect only a portion of the instructional activities that took place in the Twilight High School program.
- In the 2010–2011 school year, 34.3 percent (107 of 312) of program enrollees completed coursework, while 61.6 percent (487 of 791) of the students who were enrolled in the Twilight High School program during the 2011–2012 school year completed at least one course. Among the reasons that Twilight High School enrollees did not to complete coursework were students not being accustomed

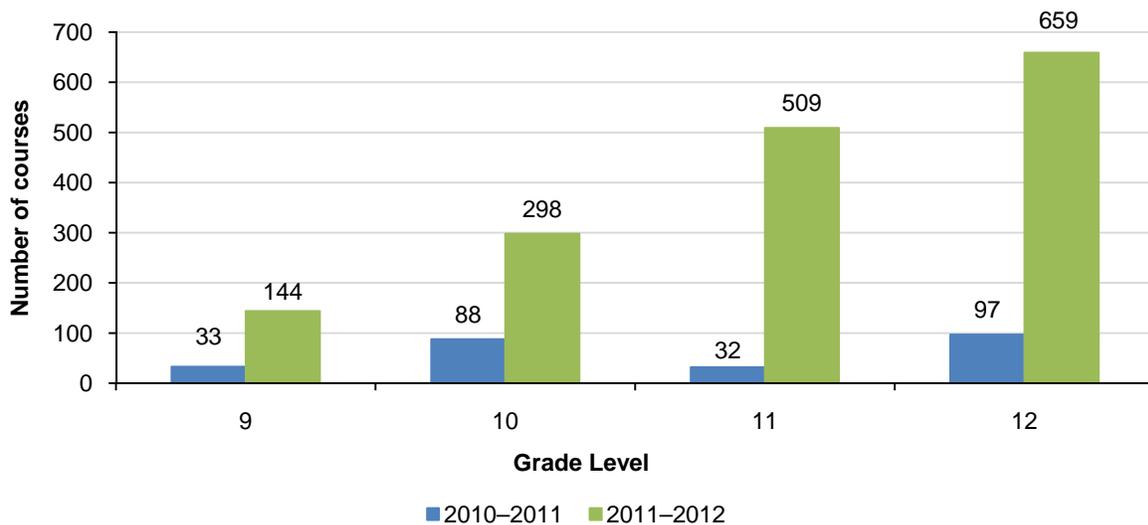
to the instructional methods, changes to enrollees' work schedules, and some students' lack of motivation. See **Figure 14**, page 13.

Figure 14. Twilight High School students who completed coursework as a percentage of Twilight High School program enrollees, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



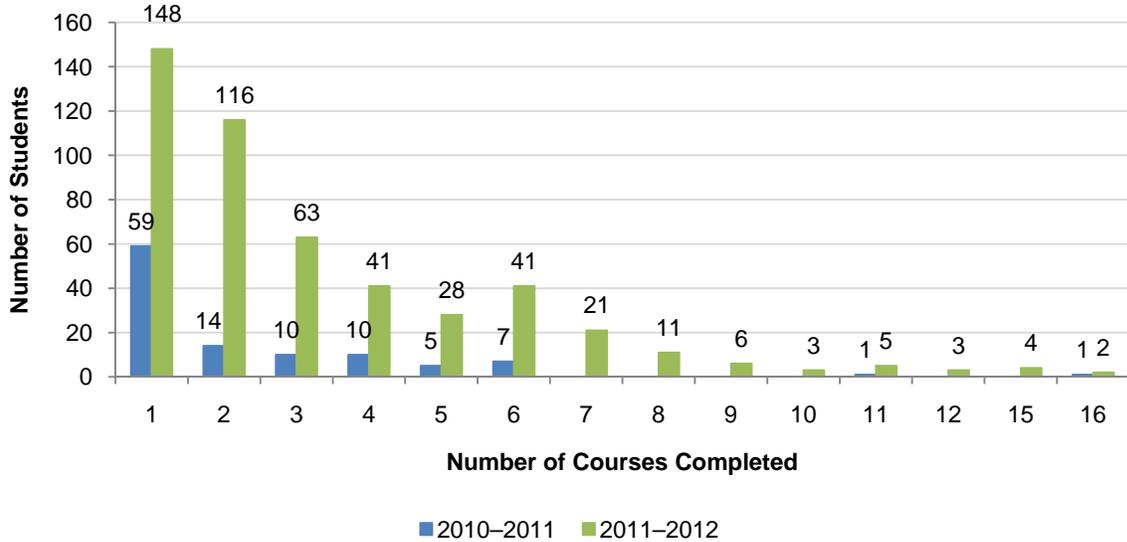
- A total of 1,610 courses were completed by Twilight High School enrollees in the 2011–2012 school year as compared to 250 courses being completed in 2010–2011. See **Figure 15**.

Figure 15. Number of courses successfully completed by students in the Twilight High School program by grade level, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



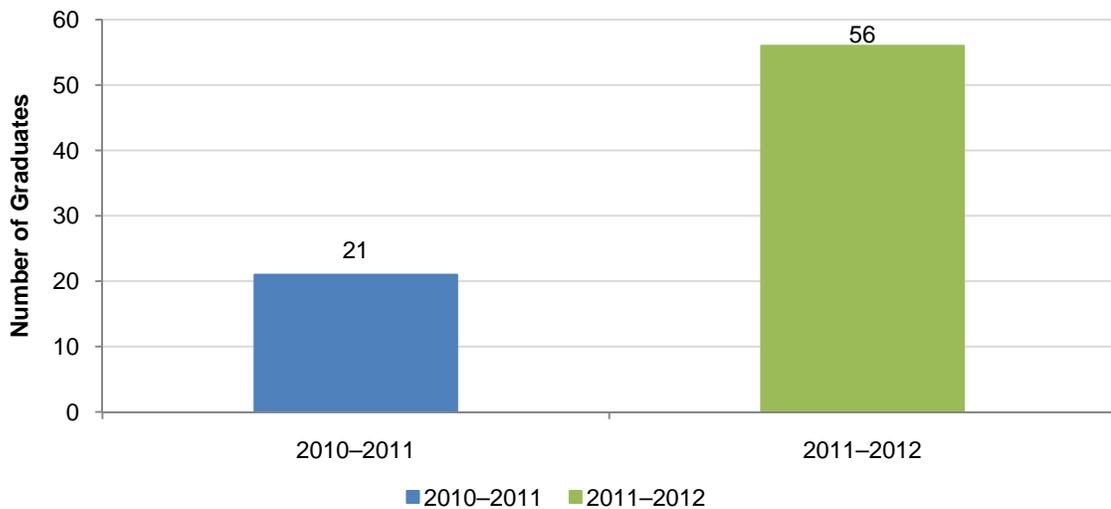
- The total number of courses completed by a single student ranged from one to 16 in both program years. Students earned one-half credit for each completed course. See **Figure 16**.

Figure 16. Number of courses completed by students in the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



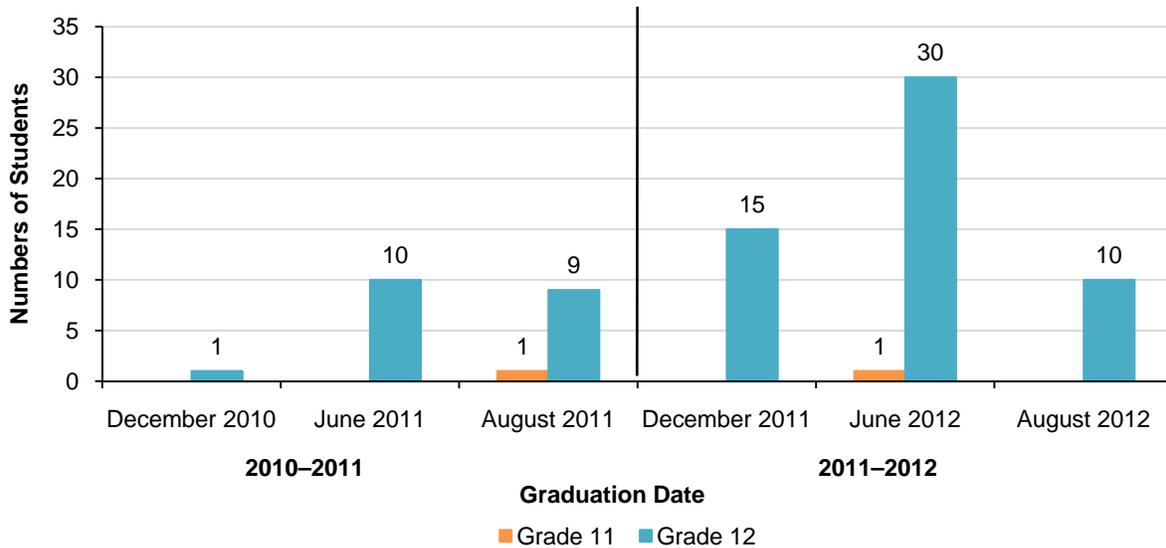
- The Twilight High School program graduated 56 students (16.1 percent of students who enrolled as grade 11 and grade 12 students and completed coursework) in the 2011–2012 school year. In comparison, the Twilight High School program graduated 21 students (38.9 percent of students who enrolled as grade 11 and grade 12 students and completed coursework) in the 2010–2011 school year. See **Figure 17**.

Figure 17. Number of Twilight High School program graduates, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



- Participants in the Twilight High School program have graduated in December, June, and August of each program implementation year. **Figure 18** reports the number of students who have graduated from high school through the Twilight High School program by graduation date.

Figure 18. Number of students who have graduated from high school through the Twilight High School program, 2010–2011 and 2011–2012



Discussion

The second year of Twilight High School program implementation has resulted in success. The number of students who enrolled in the program increased from 312 to 791, and the percentage of enrolled students who completed coursework increased from 34.3 percent to 61.6 percent. This suggests that the program not only grew, but that it also became more effective. Twilight High School students completed 1,610 courses during the school year, over six times the number of courses completed in the first year of program implementation. The number of students who graduated through the Twilight High School program also increased by more than 100 percent. In the 2010–2011 school year, 21 Twilight High School students graduated while 56 Twilight High School students graduated in the 2011–2012 school year.

As reported by a small sample of survey respondents, Twilight High School program participants were positive about their decisions to continue or to return to school through the Twilight High School program. Overall, they reported feeling empowered with a plan for their futures and supported by the Twilight High School program staff. Participation in the program was highly recommended by survey respondents. When asked how they would improve the program, survey respondents reiterated their satisfaction with the program and also recommended increasing the number of teachers affiliated with the program and increasing the number of course offerings.

Appendix A
Ages of Twilight High School program enrollees who completed coursework,
2010–2011 and 2011–2012

Age	2010–2011 school year	2011–2012 school year
15	5	2
16	7	39
17	22	140
18	21	137
19	15	89
20	7	31
21	4	24
22	2	15
23	1	5
24	–	5
Unknown	23	–