## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: School Board Members

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

# SUBJECT: TITLE I, PART A, STIMULUS, SURESCORE DUKE TIP REPORT, 2009–2010

CONTACT: Carla Stevens, 713-556-6700

Attached is the 2009–2010 Title I, Part A, Stimulus, SureScore Duke TIP report. The report assessed the impact of the SureScore program on SAT Reasoning Test taking preparedness for HISD seventh-grade students. SureScore, an educational consulting firm, provided workshops to HISD teachers to help teachers focus on critical areas of student instruction and test taking strategies for improving performance on the SAT. This program supported two HISD strategic initiatives, to Improve Student Achievement and to Improve Human Capital. Funding for the program totaled \$333,033, evenly split between supplies and materials and contracted services.

Some of this year's key findings are as follows:

- 1,136 students from 29 middle schools participated. Prior to program participation, 125 or 11.0 percent of these students met Duke TIP qualifying criteria, based on their sixth-grade Stanford 10 scores. After program participation, an additional 102 students met the criteria, although 40 of the original 125 were no longer qualified based on their 2010 Stanford 10 performance. This translates to a net gain of 62 qualified students.
- Thirty-two seventh-grade teachers participated in the SureScore mathematics workshop and 34 participated in the ELA/reading workshop.
- Both teacher and student participants rated the program positively, believing that participation would improve student performance on college entrance exams.
- Overall, 250 of the participating students registered for Duke TIP and 208 actually tested. Gains over the SureScore diagnostic pre-test were noted for critical reading, mathematics, and writing. The writing gain of nearly 100 points was statistically significant.
- Twenty-four of the students who tested with Duke TIP were recognized, including 17 for both State Recognition and Academy Summer Studies, four for State Recognition and Center Summer Studies, and three for Academy Summer Studies.

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

Jung B. Chien TBG

Attachment

c: Superintendent's Direct Reports Matilda Orozco Pamela Evans Martha Salazar-Zamora June Giddings





# Title I, Part A, Stimulus, SureScore Duke TIP Report 2009–2010

Department of Research and Accountability Houston Independent School District



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

# TITLE I, PART A, STIMULUS, SureScore Duke TIP Report 2009–2010

#### **Program Description**

The purpose of Title I, Part A is to ensure that all children, particularly low-achieving children in the highest-poverty schools, have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic standards. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus bill was enacted on February 17, 2009 with provisions for key investments in education to help states and school districts across the country implement innovative strategies that will improve education for at-risk students and close the achievement gap while also stimulating the economy. The district's projected share of Title I funds in the stimulus bill is approximately \$89 million, including indirect costs, over a two-year period. Funds are to be allocated into required allocations mandated by federal law, campus-based initiatives, and districtwide initiatives.

The SureScore (SureScore PSAT and SAT Test Preparation, 2010) program is a districtwide initiative to expand opportunities for high performing HISD seventh grade students to prepare for the SAT Reasoning Test. SureScore, an educational consulting firm located in Austin, Texas, claims that student participants have averaged 100-point-plus increases in SAT composite scores because of program participation. Additionally, SureScore helps school districts create opportunities for success to their students including recognition by programs like Duke University's Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP Seventh Grade Talent Search, 2010).

In the SureScore program, students are introduced to the general structure of the SAT and are provided with proven test-taking strategies necessary to perform well on the exam. The SureScore Trainthe-Teacher Model SAT curriculum combines interacting and engaging activity-based lessons with hundreds of practice problems to reinforce strategies and prepare students for every section of the SAT. Throughout the program, students take several practice tests that closely simulate real testing conditions. Provided assessments allow teachers to establish a baseline for student performance as well as identify student strengths and weaknesses. This enables teachers to focus on the critical areas for individual student instruction.

Funding for the program totaled \$333,033 with the majority of funds evenly split between supplies and materials and contracted services.

The program goals are:

- Increase SAT scores; and
- Improve student SAT knowledge and confidence.

### **Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of this evaluation is to comply with federal mandates requiring the evaluation of Title I, Part A programs. The evaluation focused on determining the percentage of SureScore student participants meeting Duke TIP selection criteria, teacher and student evaluation of the SureScore program, and a comparison of participant performance on a baseline SAT diagnostic to performance on the Duke TIP administration of the SAT.

# **Key Findings**

- 1. How many seventh-grade students participated in the SureScore program?
- In 2009–2010, 1,136 students from 29 middle schools participated in the SureScore program.
- 2. To what extent did participating students meet Duke TIP eligibility criteria?
- 125 or 11.0 percent of the 1,136 students met or exceeded Duke TIP eligibility criteria prior to program participation based on their sixth-grade performance on the Stanford 10. These students achieved a percentile of 95 or higher on either the reading or the mathematics subtest. After program participation, an additional 102 students met or exceeded the Duke TIP criteria.
- 3. How many teachers participated in the SureScore program?
- Thirty-two teachers participated in the mathematics workshop and 34 participated in the ELA/reading workshop.
- 4. How did student participants evaluate the SureScore program?
- Based on survey data provided by SureScore, the majority of students at the two schools surveyed reported that they believed the preparation course provided them with the strategies and resources needed to perform well on college entrance exams.
- 5. How did teacher participants evaluate the SureScore program?
- Based on survey data provided by SureScore from 21 percent of the participating teachers, teacher feedback was positive with 79 percent or more responding affirmatively to eight questions pertaining to student preparation and overall quality of the program.
- 6. Did the SureScore program have an impact on SAT performance?
- Overall, 250 or 22.0 percent of participating students registered for Duke TIP SAT testing and 208 actually took the test. Gains were noted for critical reading, mathematics, and writing when compared to the diagnostic pre-test, but only the gain observed for writing was statistically significant. The average writing score increased by almost 100 points.
- 7. How many SureScore participating students were recognized by Duke TIP?
- Twenty-four, or 11.5 percent, of the SureScore participants who tested for Duke TIP were recognized, including 17 for both State Recognition and Academy Summer Studies, four for State Recognition and Center Summer Studies, and three for Academy Summer Studies.

## Recommendations

- 1. Include a released SAT diagnostic for all program participants at the end of the program to provide a measure of program impact independent of Duke TIP participation and testing. Pre-post comparisons were only available for 208 or 18.3 percent of the participating students.
- 2. Broader reporting of both student and teacher perceptions and attitudes about the program is encouraged from SureScore to better represent the activities conducted at the participating schools. For example, for 2009–2010, student survey data was only available for two of the 29 participating

schools and 69, or six percent, of the participating students. Teacher feedback was only available for 14 of 66 participants and no information was provided as to the extent to which the SureScore program was actually implemented by participating teachers. Feedback provided by the small sample of teacher participants was positive and may warrant further review if the district elects to continue this program.

# TITLE I, PART A, STIMULUS, SureScore Duke TIP Report 2009–2010

# Introduction

#### **Program Description**

The purpose of Title I, Part A is to ensure that all children, particularly low-achieving children in the highest-poverty schools, have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic standards. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus bill was enacted on February 17, 2009 with provisions for key investments in education to help states and school districts across the country implement innovative strategies that will improve education for at-risk students and close the achievement gap while also stimulating the economy. The district's projected share of Title I funds in the stimulus bill is approximately \$89 million, including indirect costs, over a two-period period. Funds are to be allocated into required allocations mandated by federal law, campus-based initiatives, and districtwide initiatives.

The SureScore program is a districtwide initiative to expand opportunities for high performing HISD seventh grade students to prepare for the SAT college preparation exam. SureScore, an educational consulting firm located in Austin, Texas, claims that student participants have averaged 100-point-plus increases in SAT composite scores. Additionally, SureScore helps school districts create opportunities for success to their students including recognition by programs like Duke University's Talent Identification program (Duke TIP).

In the SureScore program, students are introduced to the general structure of the SAT and are provided with proven test-taking strategies necessary to perform well on the exam. The SureScore Trainthe-Teacher Model SAT curriculum combines interacting and engaging activity based lessons with hundreds of practice problems to reinforce strategies and prepare students for every section of the SAT. Throughout the program, students take several practice tests that closely simulate real testing conditions. Provided assessments allow teachers to establish a baseline for student performance as well as identify student strengths and weaknesses. This enables teachers to focus on the critical areas for individual student instruction.

Funding for the program totaled \$333,033 with the majority of funds evenly split between supplies and materials and contracted services.

The program goals are:

- Increase SAT scores; and
- Improve student SAT knowledge and confidence.

#### **Purpose of the Evaluation Report**

The purpose of this evaluation is to comply with federal mandates requiring the evaluation of Title I, Part A programs. The evaluation focused on determining the percentage of SureScore student participants meeting Duke TIP selection criteria, student evaluation of the SureScore program, and a comparison of participant performance on a baseline SAT diagnostic to performance on the Duke TIP administration of the SAT.

- 1. How many seventh-grade students participated in the SureScore program?
- 2. To what extent did participating students meet Duke TIP eligibility criteria?
- 3. How many teachers participated in the SureScore program?
- 4. How did student participants evaluate the SureScore program?
- 5. How did teacher participants evaluate the SureScore program?

- 6. Did the SureScore program have an impact on SAT performance?
- 7. How many SureScore participating students were recognized by Duke TIP?

## Methodology

#### **Data Collection**

Several strategies were employed in the collection of relevant data used to evaluate the effectiveness of the SureScore program. Primary program documentation included the program budget and description from the 2009–2010 Consolidated Title I, Part A, Stimulus Application; and, teacher and student participant data provided by SureScore and Duke TIP.

#### **Measures of Academic Achievement**

The extent to which student participants met Duke TIP eligibility criteria was assessed using spring 2008–2009 and spring 2009–2010 Stanford 10 scores from HISD assessment reports.

The Stanford 10 is a norm-referenced measure. The Stanford 10 is administered in grades one through eleven and provides a way of determining the relative standing of students' academic performance when viewed in relation to the performance of students from a nationally representative sample, for comparative purposes.

Performance on the SAT was based on the released SAT diagnostic administered to participating students at the beginning of the program and Duke TIP SAT test results.

#### **Data Analysis**

The extent to which participating students met Duke TIP eligibility criteria was determined by analyzing National Percentile Rank (NPR) scores from the Stanford Reading and Mathematics subtests for 2009 and 2010. Eligibility was defined as having achieved an NPR of 95 percent or higher on either the reading or mathematics subtest of the Stanford 10. It should be noted that students do not need to meet these criteria to participate in Duke TIP testing.

Student and teacher survey data were provided by SureScore. Weighted average responses for student survey data were based on the number of students from each school agreeing or strongly agreeing with survey items. Educator workshop participation was obtained from the e-Train database.

Mean pre- and post-SAT scores were compared using the *t*-test for significant differences.

## Results

#### How many seventh grade students participated in the SureScore program?

Based on data submitted by SureScore, 1,136 HISD students from 29 middle schools participated in the program. Participants by school ranged from 15 at Holland Middle School to 55 at Edison and Long middle schools (**Table 1**).

Table 1. SureScore Participants by School and Number and Percent Meeting Duke TIP Criteria			
School	Participants	Number Eligible per Duke TIP Criteria*	Percent Eligible per Duke TIP Criteria*
Black Middle School	41	1	2.4
Briarmeadow Charter	32	5	15.6
Burbank Middle School	49	3	6.1
Cullen Middle School	28	0	0.0
Deady Middle School	23	0	0.0
Dowling Middle School	45	0	0.0

		Number Eligible per	Percent Eligible per
School	Participants	Duke TIP Criteria*	Duke TIP Criteria*
Edison Middle School	55	2	3.6
Fleming Middle School	49	4	8.2
Fonville Middle School	39	1	2.6
Grady Middle School	47	2	4.3
Gregory-Lincoln Education			
Center	28	0	0.0
Hamilton Middle School	48	14	29.2
Henry Middle School	42	2	4.8
Holland Middle School	15	1	6.7
Jackson Middle School	54	11	20.4
Johnston Middle School	45	9	20.0
Key Middle School	34	0	0.0
Lanier Middle School	16	11	68.8
Long Middle School	55	3	5.5
McReynolds Middle School	34	1	2.9
Ortiz Middle School	52	1	1.9
Pershing Middle School	41	22	53.7
Pilgrim Academy	51	1	2.0
Pin Oak Middle School	16	5	31.3
Project Chrysalis	51	1	2.0
Thomas Middle School	25	0	0.0
Welch Middle School	35	6	17.1
West Briar Middle School	38	17	44.7
Williams Middle School	48	2	4.2
Totals	1,136	125	11.0%

Table 1. SureScore Participants by School and Number and Percent Meeting Duke TIP Criteria (continued)

\* Duke TIP criteria were used as a proxy in this evaluation to identify potential high performing students and these numbers do not imply that these students registered for Duke TIP recognition.

Source: Participant list provided by SureScore

### To what extent did participating students meet Duke TIP eligibility criteria?

Based on their sixth-grade performance on the Stanford 10, 125 or 11.0 percent of the participating seventh-grade students met Duke TIP eligibility criteria prior to participating in the program (Table 1). These students achieved an NPR of 95 or higher on either the reading or the mathematics subtest. **Table 2** presents information on the percentages of participating students at various NPR bands. Almost 70 percent of the participants were below the  $75^{\text{th}}$  percentile in reading and just over half were below the  $75^{\text{th}}$  percentile in mathematics.

	<b>Reading: Percent of</b>	Mathematics: Percent of
National Percentile Rank	Participants	Participants
95+	7.9	8.7
90–94	5.7	11.0
85–89	5.3	9.5
80-84	3.4	11.6
75–79	9.1	7.9
<75	68.6	51.3

Source: Houston Independent School District, Stanford data file, Spring 2009.

Stanford 10 test data were also used to see how many participants met Duke TIP eligibility criteria in 2010. Of the 125 students eligible based on 2009 data, 40 or 32.0 percent were no longer qualified based on their 2010 test performance and 102 previously unqualified students became qualified for a net gain of 62. Therefore, in 2010, 187 of the participants were Duke TIP qualified. **Table 3** presents the 2009 and 2010 data for Duke TIP qualification by participating school.

Table 3. Duke TIP Eligibility by School for SureScore Participants, 2009–2010					
Number Eligible Number Eligible per Duke TIP per Duke TIP Change in Numbe School Participants Criteria - 2009 Criteria - 2010 Eligible					
School	Participants			Eligible	
Black Middle School	41	1	2	1	
Briarmeadow Charter	32	5	6	1	
Burbank Middle School	49	3	11	8	
Cullen Middle School	28	0	0	0	
Deady Middle School	23	0	2	2	
Dowling Middle School	45	0	1	1	
Edison Middle School	55	2	9	7	
Fleming Middle School	49	4	0	-4	
Fonville Middle School	39	1	2	1	
Grady Middle School Gregory-Lincoln Education	47	2	4	2	
Center	28	0	0	0	
Hamilton Middle School	48	14	19	5	
Henry Middle School	42	2	7	5	
Holland Middle School	15	1	0	-1	
Jackson Middle School	54	11	11	0	
Johnston Middle School	45	9	15	6	
Key Middle School	34	0	0	0	
Lanier Middle School	16	11	9	-2	
Long Middle School	55	3	5	2	
McReynolds Middle School	34	1	4	3	
Ortiz Middle School	52	1	5	4	
Pershing Middle School	41	22	23	1	
Pilgrim Academy	51	1	1	0	
Pin Oak Middle School	16	5	8	3	
Project Chrysalis	51	1	6	5	
Thomas Middle School	25	0	2	2	
Welch Middle School	35	6	6	0	
West Briar Middle School	38	17	26	9	
Williams Middle School	48	2	3	1	
Totals		125	187	62	

Note: 40 of the 125 qualified students in 2009 were no longer qualified in 2010; 102 new students became qualified for a net gain of 62.

Source: Houston Independent School District, Stanford data files, Spring 2009, and Spring 2010.

## How many teachers participated in the SureScore program?

Based on information submitted by SureScore, 66 HISD educators participated in the program. These educators attended one of two (six hours per day) professional workshops to prepare them to implement the SureScore curriculum. One day focused on reading/ELA activities and one day focused on mathematics. Based on data provided by e-Train, 32 educators participated in the mathematics workshop and 34 participated in the reading/ELA workshop (**Table 4**).

Table 4. Educator Participation in SureScore Workshops, 2009–2010			
SureScore Workshop	Participants		
SureScore Math SAT Prep 6–8	32		
SureScore ELA SAT Prep 6–8	34		
Total (unduplicated)	66		

### How did student participants evaluate the SureScore program?

SureScore provided student feedback from 69 students from two middle schools, Welch and Black. This represents 6.5 percent of the participating students. The results are presented in **Table 5.** Overall student feedback was very positive on all six survey items. Students believed that the coursework was challenging, and that the strategies learned would be beneficial for both college admissions testing and performance in other classes. While these results may be representative, they must be taken with caution as only six percent of the participants were surveyed.

Table 5. Student Survey Results Survey Question	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree: Black Middle School (n=34)	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree: Welch Middle School (n=35)	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree: Weighted Average
I am confident that I am able to apply the new test taking strategies on the college admissions exam.	85	96	91
I found the coursework challenging.	97	96	96
The strategies that I learned in the SureScore preparation course helped improve my performance in other classes.	69	95	83
The strategies that I learned in the SureScore preparation course were introduced in a way that was easy to learn and apply.	88	100	94
The SureScore SAT Preparation course helped prepare me to take the college admissions exam.	93	100	97
The SureScore SAT Preparation course provided me the strategies and resources needed to perform well on the college admissions exam.	90	100	95

Source: SureScore

## How did teacher participants evaluate the SureScore program?

SureScore provided survey data from 14, or 21 percent, of the 66 teacher participants (**Table 6**). Feedback was positive as 79 percent or more responded by "agreed" or "strongly agreed" on each of eight items addressing program quality and student impact. The lowest score of 79 percent was regarding the application of SureScore strategies to other coursework.

Percent Agree or Strongly
Agree (n=14)
93
86
93
79
100
100
100
86

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### Did the SureScore program have an impact on SAT performance?

Of the 1,136 student participants, 250 registered for Duke TIP testing and 208 actually took the test. The mean SAT scores for the pre- and post-tests are presented in **Table 7**.

Table 7. Mean SAT Pre and Post Scores for SureScore Participants (N=208)				
Subtest	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Change	Significance
Critical Reading	349	377	28	n.s
Mathematics	370	406	36	n.s
Writing	280	377	97	P<.001

Sources: SureScore and Duke TIP

Gains on all three subtests were positive, and the gain of almost 100 points on the writing subtest was statistically significant. Duke TIP did not provide test dates for students but most students tested between December 2009 and February 2010. The fact that gains were observed after less than a full academic year of student participation in SureScore is also positive. These results are promising but are only based on 18.3 percent of the student participants.

### How many SureScore participating students were recognized by Duke TIP?

Overall, 24, or 11.5 percent, of the participating students were recognized by Duke TIP (**Table 8**, see page 10). Seventeen were recognized for both State Recognition and Academy Summer Studies, four for State Recognition and Center Summer Studies, and three for Academy Summer Studies. The State Recognition ceremony is similar to a graduation ceremony and is conducted at various locations throughout Texas. There is a keynote speaker and each student honoree is called onto the stage to receive

a medallion and shake hands with dignitaries. The Summer Studies programs are three-week concentrated programs in an area of interest to the student and are designed to nurture the talents of gifted students. The majority of the summer study programs are held at the Duke University Campus. Students selected for the Center Summer Studies Program have higher scores than those selected for the Academy Summer Studies program.

Table 8. Number of SureScore Students Recognized by Duke TIP, 2010				
Type of Recognition	Number	Percent (Base=208)		
State Recognition and Academy Summer Studies Program	17	8.2		
State Recognition and Center Summer Studies Program	4	1.9		
Academy Summer Studies Program	3	1.4		
Totals	24	11.5		

# Discussion

The extent to which this program will contribute to improved SAT performance is difficult to determine given the long interval between participation in the program and actual high school SAT testing, specifically four years. Initial results are promising as gains were noted on all three subtests of the SAT, and the gain of almost 100 points on writing achieved statistical significance. These findings should be interpreted with caution given the absence of information on actual classroom implementation of the activities learned during the professional development training provided by SureScore. Also, there appear to be no provisions for continuing practice of the test taking strategies for the student participants, a key requirement given the long interval until high school SAT testing.

# Recommendations

- 1. Include a released SAT diagnostic at the end of the program to provide a more valid measure of program impact on all students, not just those electing to participate in Duke TIP testing.
- 2. Broader reporting of both student and teacher perceptions and attitudes about the program is encouraged from SureScore to better represent the activities conducted at the participating schools. For example, for 2009–2010, student survey data was only available for two of the 29 participating schools and 69, or six percent, of the participating students. Teacher feedback was only available for 14 of 66 participants and no information was provided as to the extent to which the SureScore program was actually implemented by participating teachers. Feedback provided by the small sample of teacher participants was positive and may warrant further review if the district elects to continue this program.