

## Press Release

### *School District Decentralization, Minority Performance, and Latino Dropouts*

COLLEGE STATION--A report released by the Texas Educational Excellence Project (TEEP) finds evidence that decentralization policies at the administrative level within school districts affect overall student performance. Across the state, school districts employ various administrative structural policies – some school districts centrally locate their administrators off-campus while others adopt decentralization policies and place administrators across district campuses. These policies affect minorities and Anglos differently across indicators of school dropout and performance on the TAAS test.

In an effort to understand how varying structural policies affect minorities and Anglos, authors of the TEEP report use a technique that allows them to see how district policies, teacher quality, district financial resources, and environmental constraints impact TAAS performance of Latino, African American, and Anglo students. Results indicate that, “decentralization policies have a more potent impact among minorities than among Anglos,” offers Holly Goerdel, TEEP Research Associate.

While these impacts are consistently positive for all student groups, minorities are more advantaged than Anglos by district policies that support decentralization of administrators when evaluating TAAS performance. That is, student performance on the TAAS test increases as the percentage of on-campus administrators in a district increases, all else equal. This evidence supports research that teachers are better able to deliver educational services when administrative decision-makers are positioned on-campus, making them more accessible and reducing communication costs between administrators, teachers, and school support staff members.

Administrators are less likely to have the necessary knowledge of local school conditions when they are mostly located off-campus. As a result, they often cannot appropriately provide, or make decisions concerning, educational services. In fact, Ms. Goerdel adds that, “administrators working in centralized environments may engage in activities that are not necessarily driven by demands coming from parents, students, and teachers.” Generally, this could distract schools from achieving a number of goals, such as improving TAAS (TAKS) performance, decreasing the dropout rate, increasing SAT/ACT scores, and improving basic attendance rates.

Also, administrative decentralization might be seen as a policy that assists in closing the performance gap between minorities and Anglos across school districts on the TAAS test. When evaluating other performance indicators, such as the dropout rate, evidence indicates that administrative decentralization policies, alone, do not help or harm minorities or Anglos. For example, in addressing the Latino dropout problem, district decentralization does not help or harm the dropout rate. However, based on previous evidence, it is important to consider how administrative decentralization policies might

help minority groups, especially Latinos, improve standardized test scores. An improvement in this area might signal future improvement in additional performance areas, such as the rate of dropping out.

The Texas Educational Excellence Project seeks to apply scholarly research to educational policy issues in order to make recommendations for greater quality and equity in Texas school systems. Statistical data for all districts used for the report can be found at <http://teep.tamu.edu/>.

The Carlos Cantu Hispanic Education and Opportunity Endowment provides funding for this study and other studies concerning Latino dropout research. This study is part of a large project studying factors affecting Latino dropout rates.

To see the entire report visit the TEEP web site at [teep.tamu.edu](http://teep.tamu.edu)

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