



EVALUATION OF A SCHOOL CLIMATE TRANSFORMATION GRANT

EDUCATION POLICY PROJECT SUMMARY

THE PROJECT

The School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop, enhance, or expand systems of support for, and technical assistance to, schools implementing a multi-tiered system of support for improving school climate. The International High School of New Orleans (IHSNO) was awarded the five-year grant in 2019 with the purpose of significantly building the school's capacity to implement and sustain evidence-based activities that promote a positive school climate.

IHSNO contracted with The Policy & Research Group (PRG) in October 2021 to conduct an implementation and outcome evaluation of the school's progress toward meeting program goals and objectives.

THE PROGRAM

IHSNO's multitiered project included evidence-based staff training, a cross-age peer mentoring program, a teacher committee, and prevention programming for students. All project activities were designed to reduce problem behaviors among students, increase academic achievement and engagement, and improve school climate perceptions.

Through the grant, IHSNO aimed to implement targeted and ongoing prevention and trauma-informed programming to support IHSNO students and staff. Substance use prevention strategies included an opioid awareness and mitigation program that incorporated the Smart Moves Smart Choices Toolkit and annual opioid awareness assemblies for students.

THE EVALUATION

PRG developed a comprehensive implementation and outcome evaluation of the IHSNO SCTG program. Implementation objectives established expectations for successful program implementation. The program had three primary implementation goals: (1) implement Tier-I universal and preventive programming; (2) implement Tier-II and -III targeted interventions and intensive supports; and (3) implement a continuous improvement process to monitor progress toward project goals and objectives.

The program had four outcome goals, which were focused on change in disciplinary behavior, academic achievement, school engagement, and perceptions of school climate. Specifically, the program sought to: (1) reduce student problem behaviors; (2) increase student academic achievement; (3) increase school engagement among students and parents; and (4) improve school climate perceptions among students, parents, and staff.

SETTING

- Implemented in a open-enrollment charter school in New Orleans, LA

PARTICIPANTS

- Students, families, and school staff
- Students at IHSNO were predominantly Black, Hispanic/Latino/a, and/or multiracial
- Approximately one third of parents spoke a language other than English

COVID-19 IMPACT

Students were unable to access the school building for a large portion of the grant period due to COVID-19; therefore, IHSNO was unable to implement the project as originally intended during the first two years of the grant.

MULTI-TIERED PROJECT STRUCTURE

Prevention programming

Cross-age peer mentoring

Teacher committee

Evidenced-based staff training



OUTCOME MEASURES



Discipline



Engagement



Achievement



Graduation



Staff turnover

STUDY FINDINGS

Student Outcomes



IHSNO aimed to reduce problem behaviors among students, including disruptive behaviors, willful misconduct, fighting, and suspensions. Administrative data from the 2023–24 school year suggest that IHSNO saw a decrease in disruptive behaviors from Year Four to Year Five.



IHSNO aimed to increase academic achievement among students. Student achievement on the standardized LEAP assessments remained steady from the 2022–23 year to 2023–24. IHSNO saw an increase in graduation rates from Year Four (94%) to Year Five (100%).



IHSNO aimed to improve school engagement among students. Rates of chronic absenteeism (missing 15 or more days of school) and disciplinary referrals for skipping class or school decreased from the 2022–23 to the 2023–24 school years.



IHSNO aimed to improve school climate perceptions among students. Survey responses indicate that students felt lukewarm about the school climate at IHSNO at the end of both the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years.

Staff Outcomes



IHSNO aimed to improve school climate perceptions among teachers and staff. Survey responses from 2023–24 school year suggested neutral staff satisfaction on most measures. This represented a decrease from the previous year in most cases.



IHSNO aimed to reduce staff turnover. Administrative data suggest mixed results. Specifically, that a lower proportion of instructional staff were new to IHSNO during the 2023–24 school year compared with 2022–23, however, a larger proportion of staff did not commit to return to IHSNO at the end of 2023–24 school year, compared with 17% the previous year.

Parent Outcomes



IHSNO aimed to increase engagement among parents and guardians of IHSNO students. Survey data indicated that parental engagement was low in Year Five, consistent with their engagement during Year Four.



Survey data indicate that parents and guardians had moderately favorable attitudes toward the school climate and school responsiveness after the 2023–24 school year. Scores on both the climate and responsiveness scales represent increases over the 2022–23 school year.

CONCLUSIONS

- Results from our evaluation of IHSNO’s School Climate Transformation Grant demonstrate mixed progress in implementing planned program activities and limited progress towards outcome goals.
- Data from administrator interviews and project meetings suggest that implementation was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Instruction was virtual for the first two years of the grant, and turnover increased for both students and staff during the evaluation period.
- The school ultimately implemented all Tier-I programs and had mixed success implementing Tier-II and -III interventions during the final two years of the grant.
- By Year Five, IHSNO saw progress in student outcome goals related to behavior and engagement. However, improvements in parent and staff outcomes and academic achievement were not observed.

See PRG’s full evaluation report at [this link](#).

Learn more about our work at www.policyandresearch.com